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FORTEAN TIMES

THE JOURNAL OF STRANGE PHENOMENA

CATTLE MUTILATION IN AMERICA

STRANGER THAN FICTION

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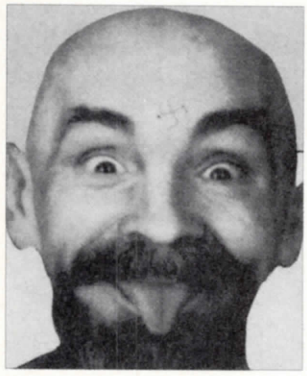

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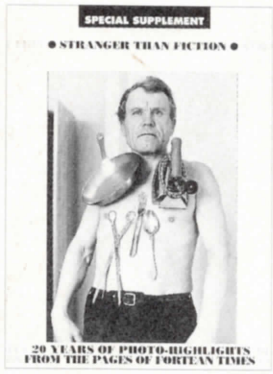

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WHY 'FORTEAN'?

CHARLES FORT (1874-1932)

Fortean Times is a bi-monthly magazine of news, reviews and research on all manner of strange phenomena and experiences, curiosities, prodigies and portents, formed in 1973 to continue the work of the iconoclastic philosopher CHARLES FORT. Fort was sceptical about scientific explanations, observing how scientists argued for and against various theories and phenomena according to their own beliefs, rather than the rules of evidence. He was appalled that data not fitting the collective paradigm was ignored, suppressed, discredited or explained away (which is quite different from explaining a thing).

Fort was perhaps the first to speculate that mysterious lights seen in the sky might be craft from outer space. He coined the term 'teleportation' which has passed into general usage through science fiction. His dictum "One measures a circle beginning anywhere" expresses his philosophy of Continuity and the 'doctrine of the hyphen', in which everything is in an intermediate state between extremes. He had notions of the universe-as-organism and the transient nature of all apparent phenomena. Far from being an over-credulous man, Fort cut at the very roots of credulity: "I cannot accept that the products of minds are subject matter for beliefs ... I conceive of nothing, in religion, science, or philosophy, that is more than the proper thing to wear, for a while."

Fort was born in Albany, New York, in 1874 into a family of Dutch immigrants. Beatings by a tyrannical father helped set him against authority and dogma, and on leaving home at the age of 18 he hitch-hiked around the world to put some "capital into the bank of experience." At 22 he contracted malaria, married his nurse and settled down to 20 years of impoverished journalism in the Bronx. During this time he read extensively in the literature of science, taking notes on small squares of paper in a cramped shorthand of his own invention, which he filed in shoe boxes.

In 1916, when he was 42, Fort came into a modest inheritance, just enough to relieve him of the necessity of having to earn a living. He started writing *The Book of the Damned*, which his friend, the novelist Theodore Dreiser, bullied his own publisher into printing in 1919. Fort fell into a depression, burnt all his notes (which numbered some 40,000) as he had done a few years earlier, and in 1921 set sail for London, where he spent eight years living near the British Museum (39 Marchmont Street) and wrote *New Lands* (1923). Returning to New York, he published *Lo!* in 1931 and *Wild Talents* in 1932, shortly before he died. He left 60,000 notes, now in the New York Public Library.

THE GANG OF FORT:
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Bob Rickard
& Paul Sieveking

Contributing Editors:
Steve Moore
& Mike Dash

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Bob Rickard

EDITORIAL

Ghosts in the Machine

Paul Sieveking

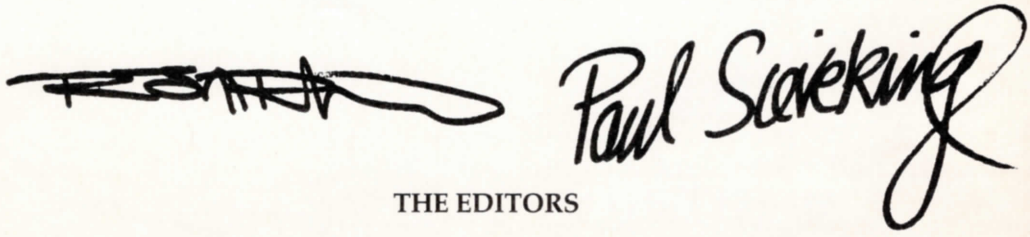
● On page seven we note that Jews can now fax their prayers to the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem and also the debate amongst Catholic theologians about whether to permit the faxing of confessions to priests. Whatever next? We are familiar with the new folklore of 'demon possessed' computers so it was with wry amusement that we noticed the forthcoming release of *Word For Windows 3.0* includes a feature called 'automatic writing' which not only checks your spelling and grammar while you are lost in an electronic seance, but pops up to suggest any rewrites it thinks necessary. Of course computer commands 'invoke' programs which 'initialise entities' in 'hex'code, but can chips really channel? Booting up your 'ghost writer' may need 'hands on' after all!

● As we go to press, the maverick messiah David Koresh – aka Vernon Howell, a renegade Seventh Day Adventist – continues to hold out against the FBI in Waco, Texas. Stymied, the FBA are rattling the fortress cage of the Branch Davidians (as they call themselves) by blasting non-stop recordings of Buddhist chants. An earlier Koresh was Dr Cyrus Teed (1839-1908). Howell – who once penned a song called 'There's A Madman In Waco' – has a charismatic hold over a flock largely composed of women, as did Teed. Teed, however, is more interesting: he experimented with electro-magnetic alchemy, planned to build a New Jerusalem in Florida, and believed in a hollow earth. 'Korenshanity', designed as a scientific replacement for Christianity, flourished for a while before WW1 (for more information see John Michell's *Eccentric Lives*). Millennial flutters – like those at Waco, and in Korea (see ***FT66***) – are bound to increase as we approach 2000 AD, and we promise to keep a spare eye on developments.

● The English horse-ripping continues, and we give a bulletin on page 46. The chief mystery is how the uncatchable assailant(s) are able to do their dirty work without being kicked to bits. By contrast, the questions raised by the cattle mutilations in the USA over the last 20 years are much more various and intractable, and have led to a host of whacky theories, outlined in our feature 'Poor Cow' on page 23.

● We were to have a report in this issue on the claim that a moa, long presumed extinct, had been photographed on New Zealand's South Island. Although discounted by local authorities, our preliminary enquiries reveal that there is more to this case – indeed, a new search is underway, led by Paddy Freaney, who made the original sighting. Information is accumulating and we hope to include a more substantial report next issue.

● CHRISTMAS COMPETITION: The correct answers were: 1B (Hoy); 2B (*The Book of the Damned*); 3C (Mary – changed to Marie by Conan Doyle when he fictionised the story); 4A (crocodile); 5C (Angelsey). The winner of the sun dial was Ms Dionne Jones of Truro. Runners-up: Angela Arnell, Mr Jay Arnold, Miss Deisrée Atkinson, Dave Baldock, Wayne Bee, Claire Blamey, Miss R Cody, Miss H B Duncan, Mr A Foxton, Mr M K Griffiths, Mr B Hughes, Mr A B Kent, C P Lazenby, Mr A McBeath, Mrs A Mirfin, Sarah Morcom, Steve Slaughter, Graham Whiberley.



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STRANGE DAYS

16 pages of worldwide weirdness

LOOKING DOWN IN THE MOUTH

Yes, we did a double-take, too, when we first saw this portrait of a toad whose eyes have developed upside-down from the roof of its mouth. 'Gollum' was found by Deirdre Warren, 20, in the garden pond of her home in Burlington, Ontario, when she noticed it hopping, apparently with its 'eyes' closed.

Deidre took Gollum to Jim Bogart, professor of herpetology at the University of Guelph, who identified it as an otherwise normal male American toad, quite common in Ontario. There are no openings or rudimentary eyes where its eyes should normally be. Prof. Bogart had never heard of such a deformity and was surprised it had survived so long.

Christine Bishop, a toxicologist with the Canadian Wildlife Service, planned to make a special study of the pond's environs and other residents. Ms Bishop and other officials stressed that they had no reason to believe this mutation is pollution-related without further investigation. *Hamilton (Ont) Spectator, 4 Sept 1992.*

So far, Gollum seems to be unique – a sport of nature. Perhaps an ingenious reader can suggest what the evolutionary advantage might be of seeing your food at such close quarters, just before it vanishes down your gullet.

FORTEAN ALMANAC 13 April – 14 June 1993

Notable feasts and anniversaries in the coming weeks

WEDNESDAY 14 APRIL: Birthday of Erich von Däniken (1935), the uncritical but immensely popular proponent of ancient alien intervention.
FRIDAY 16 APRIL: Dr Albert Hofmann had the first LSD trip today in 1943 and fell off his bicycle.
SATURDAY 17 APRIL: On this day in 1976, June Melling, 12, saw a menacing 'owl man' near Mawnan church in Cornwall.
TUESDAY 20 APRIL: According to English folklore, the cuckoo sings today for the first time.
FRIDAY 23 APRIL: St George's Day. The dragon killer, England's patron saint, is a combination of the Nordic hero Siegfried, the Green Man or wodewose, and a bishop of Alexandria.
SATURDAY 24 APRIL: In 1964 police officer Lonnie Zamora witnessed a metallic 'flying saucer' take off near Socorro, New Mexico.
FRIDAY 30 APRIL: Walpurgisnacht. Feast Day of St Sophia, the spirit of female wisdom symbolised by the dove of Aphrodite, later transformed into the dove of the Holy Ghost.
SATURDAY 1 MAY: Beltane, one of the eight great pagan festivals of the year, from the Gaelic *Bealltainn* (fire). The beginning of summer.
THURSDAY 6 MAY: Two explorers were born today in 1856: Sigmund Freud and Robert Peary.
SATURDAY 8 MAY: The Apparition of St Michael. Climbing one of the hills dedicated to Mercury/Hermes/Michael is guaranteed to cure madness.
SATURDAY 15 MAY: Feast Day of St Dymphna, patron saint of the insane.
FRIDAY 21 MAY: New moon, with partial solar eclipse, 14:06 GMT. Prodigious frog fall in Gibraltar (1921).
WEDNESDAY 26 MAY: Shavuot (Jewish Pentecost). In 1907 hailstones containing the image of a robed woman, "like the Virgin of the Hermits", fell at Remirement in France.
FRIDAY 28 MAY: Feast Day of St Theodolous the Stylite. Fall of periwinkles and crabs in Worcester (1881).
MONDAY 31 MAY: The apparent teleportation of Dr Geraldo and his wife in their car from Bahia Blanca, Argentina, to Mexico (1968).
WEDNESDAY 2 JUNE: Feast day of St Elmo. 'St Elmo's Fire', the electrical discharge sometimes seen around the masthead of ships, was taken as a sign of the saint's protection.
MONDAY 7 JUNE: A train arrived in Chicago with a dead trout inside its shattered headlight (1937).
FRIDAY 11 JUNE: Feast Day of St Barnabas. A white-robed man, identified by the crowd as Jesus Christ, appeared in a Nairobi slum (1988).

STARLING COOK OUT

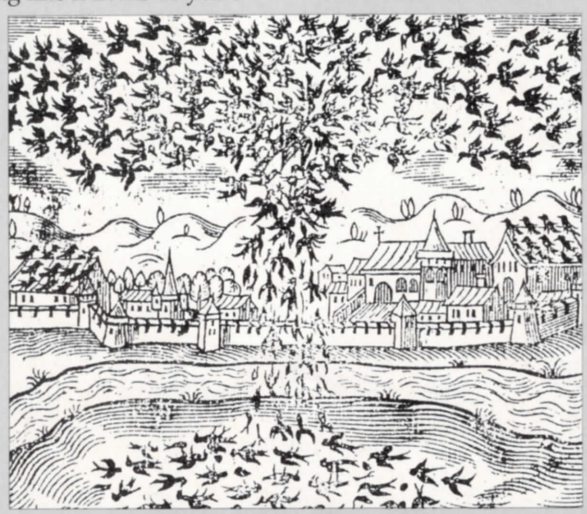
Mystery surrounds the hundreds of starlings found dead or dying in a remote lane in Anglesey. About 300 birds were found along a 20-yard stretch of the lane near Bodedern, some heaped on top of each other, some in hedgerows.

Alistair Moralee, senior RSPB warden on the island, said he'd never known anything like it in his 10 years with the Society. He has sent specimens to various agencies for investigation. Theories range from poison to being zapped by lightning as they perched on overhead cables.

An unofficial post mortem seems to suggest the birds' livers had been cooked. How did Mr Moralee deduce this? "I was told the livers appeared bronze coloured, which is how they would look if cooked." Whatever happened - poison, lightning or perhaps even microwave radiation - it did not affect any other internal organ. "It is strange that only the liver was affected," he said.

Mr Moralee remains puzzled by another detail: "There were no dead birds in the fields on either side of the track." And why only starlings?

Later, Gareth Jones – of the Welsh Office Agricultural Development Advisory Service (ADAS) at Trawsgoed, near Aberystwyth – said their tests showed the birds had not been poisoned by any kind of pesticide. He did reveal, though, that someone phoned ADAS saying that they recalled a similar incident occurring on the Llyn Peninsula "many years ago". *D.Post, 7 & 8 Dec 1992.*



A battle of starlings over Cork in 1621 – from an old account – which left thousands dead. Did something similar happen in Angelsey?

Perhaps the birds fell from the sky, as happened near Campeche, on the coast of Mexico last October. This mystery – baffling experts – has involved many hundreds of members of 16 different species. They fall with head injuries, it is said – but how this can be distinguished from impact injuries is *not* said. *[PA] 22 Oct 1992.*

FAX BE TO GOD

People who want to plant notes to God in Jerusalem's Wailing Wall can now do so by fax. Every day, hundreds of notes seeking divine intervention are stuffed into cracks in the wall, once part of the Second Temple (destroyed in 70 AD), and now Judaism's holiest shrine. The fax line was set up by Bezeq, the Israeli telephone company, on 20 January. A member of staff collects the messages, folds them and takes them to the wall. The number is Jerusalem (0109722) 612 222.

The Catholics are not far behind: a new confession fax machine is to be unveiled at Italy's annual church fair in Vincenza in May. The idea of 'confaxion' has stirred fierce theological controversy. Traditional teaching holds that the sacrament requires the presence of the priest and the person confessing. *[AP] 19 Jan, Int. Herald Tribune, 22 Jan, Observer, 24 Jan 1993.*

BOOM TIME FOR MELONS

The American Deep South has been hit by an outbreak of exploding melons – in fields, stores, fridges and kitchens. Tom McElroy, of Dadeville, Alabama, took a ten-pounder home and left it in his kitchen. "Ten minutes later", he said, "I was dripping in juice and my place looked like a war zone." Experts speculated about a bacterial disease causing gas build-ups. *The People, 21 Feb 1993.*

RETURN TO SENDER

Tom Field, 42, from Turnditch, Derbyshire, was baffled when the postman brought him two £20 fixed penalty tickets for illegally parking a steamroller in Edinburgh last December. He had never been to Edinburgh in his life, and he doesn't own a steamroller. *Sunday Mail, 7 Feb 1993.*

BARBIE NEWS

Someone in Sandusky, Illinois, is preying on Barbie dolls. He rips off their clothes and slashes them across the breasts and crotch with a knife. So far 24 dolls have been attacked. *Daily Record, 15 Jan 1993.*

Our correspondent Karma Tenzin Dorje spotted the following in the American paper *Common Ground* (Winter 1992): "I channel Barbie, archetypal feminine plastic essence who embodies the stereotypical wisdom of the 60s and 70s. Since childhood I have been gifted with an intensely personal, growth-oriented relationship with Barbie, the polyethylene essence who is 700 million teaching entities. [..] I'm happy to answer your questions, and my enlightening newsletter shares my experiences as also guided by Skipper, Ken, Poindexter, and my own Higher Inner Child. Send questions with $3 to Barbara, 23 Ross Avenue, San Anselmo, CA 94960."

SIMULACRA CORNER

An old woman went to sleep under this tree near Fountain's Abbey, North Yorkshire, in Studley Royal Park, and was turned to wood. The photograph was taken by John Billingsley early in 1992.

We forgot to say that the giant sunbathing stone woman last issue was on the island of La Digue in the Seychelles.

We are always glad to receive pictures of spontaneous forms and figures, or any curious images. Send your snaps to the editorial address – with SAE – and we'll pay a fiver for any we use.

Sidelines

Helen Sanger underwent surgery to alter her palm prints after a fortune teller in Duluth, Minnesota, predicted her life lines spelled an early grave. *Sunday Mail (Scotland) 29 Nov 1992.*

The mummified body of a 200-year-old mouse was found squashed flat inside an 18th century hymnbook by a librarian at Salisbury Cathedral, Wiltshire. *D.Star, 29 Jan 1993.*

Silent Ernst Hort spoke an average of 3.5 words a day over a two month period, a divorce court, in Bielefeld, Germany, heard. His wife Suzanne told the judge: "We never have any rows because he never says anything." She kept a notebook, in which his longest recorded utterance was: "This coffee tastes like dish-water," and when asked for a divorce, he simply scribbled, "I agree." *D.Express, 10 Sept 1992.*

Angry cowboy Ross Howard of Denver, protesting about men being allowed to marry men, was refused a licence to marry his horse. The hitch was a technicality; the law says three-year-olds need parental consent. *D.Record, 28 Sept 1992.*

Harriet Lasky put a piece of bubble gum in her mouth when she was seven and she is still chewing it, 33 years later. She keeps it in a glass of water overnight at her home in Denver, Colorado – and says "it gets better with age." *Sunday Mail, 21 Feb 1993.*

MAN BITES ALIEN!

An occasional selection of Fortean headlines from newspapers around the world.

ICE FROM HEAVENS STARTLES NUNS
Cincinnati Enquirer, 20 Nov 1989.

GLUE VICTIM DIALS 999 WITH HIS NOSE
D.Star, 4 June 1991.

OWLS WITH SPECS EXPLAIN VENTRILOQUISM D.Telegraph, 9 July 1991.

COUPLE LIVE IN FEAR OF DANGER HEDGE
Evening Leader (Clwyd & Chester), 30 July 1991.

JAPAN'S MAJOR TRAFFIC PROBLEM: DEAD RACCOONS
Nairobi Sunday Times, 18 Aug 1991.

2M ALLIGATORS BESIEGE TOWN
D.Express, 19 Aug 1991.

FAECES-TOSSING INARTISTIC, JURY RULES
Victoria (BC) Times-Colonist, 24 Aug 1991.

RELIEF FROM SMELL SOON Manchester Metro News, 30 Aug 1991.

TROGLODYTE EXPELLED

A 39-year-old Norwegian student was expelled from the University of Oslo because he smelled too bad. He then sued the university for £120,000, because they wouldn't let him sit his exams. He came from northern Norway to Oslo in 1978, and appeared to be normal; but in the early 1980s he started to live in a small cavern in the ground at Nordmarka, Ulleval, which led to the neglect of personal hygiene; as early as 1983, he was asked to study in a separate room from his fellow students.

The man makes his own clothes by sewing scraps of textiles together. Recently he was seen wearing boots made of birch bark and carrying a rucksack of plaited branches and leaves. Although he stinks and is infested with lice, the man is, according to many at the university, very intelligent, good at his subject (astrophysics) and a nice person.

On 11 January, he lost his court case and was ordered to pay costs and take a shower. He is appealing (but not very, as one journalist added). *Idag, 14 Dec; Guardian, 29 Dec 1992 + 12 Jan 1993.*

GONE TO PIECES

On 19 August 1992, the Prest family were getting ready for supper when one of them noticed a skull on the balcony 12 miles south of Prince George, Canada. It had been brought there by the family dog, Animal, an eight-month-old huskie-lab cross. In the following days, Animal brought home more human bones, which were collected by the Mounties.

Police dogs were unable to find the rest of the corpse, but Bert Prest thought it must be their neighbour, Toivo Haaparanta, 44, who had lived in a trailer up the road and had last been seen walking into the bush in 1990. By 10 September, the identity of the bones had been confirmed, but Animal had only retrieved the skull, pelvis, a portion of limb, boot and several vertebrae. *Victoria (BC) Times-Colonist, 24 Aug + 10 Sept 1992.*

HOOK, LINE AND SINKER

In China's Shaanxi province, an angler thought he'd hooked a giant fish. He reeled it in, saw a human head and promptly fainted. His 'catch' was a farmer, trying to drown himself because of personal problems. Passers-by pulled the drowning man out of the river, which presumably left two deeply unsatisfied participants in the drama. *South China Morning Post (etc), 28 July 1992.*

A LOAD OF SQUALLS

Kenji Ozawa – a Japanese meteorologist and inventor – told a conference that he has perfected a method of making miniature rain clouds that would be useful for watering lawns. The 4ft-wide clouds, which hover close to the ground, can deliver 15 gallons of water in an hour, and even have 2ft lightning bolts. "I simply extract humidity from the air with a special machine, and release small clouds of charged particles, which are zapped by an electric impulse to begin raining." We suspect that humidity isn't the only thing Mr Ozawa is extracting… *D.Telegraph, 24 Oct 1992.*

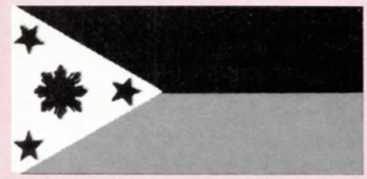
WRONG NUMBERS

● As Jason Pegler, a salesman with the AA in Dover, left his house in Folkestone, he heard the phone ringing in one of the phone boxes outside. On impulse, he picked it up. It was a colleague at work. "Hello Jason, it's Sue, the fax machine isn't working". At first she didn't believe she had rung a public telephone; then she realised what had happened. She knew Jason lived in Folkestone, so dialled 0303, and then by mistake dialled his staff number instead of his telephone number. The first five digits happened to be the number of the phone box. *Kent Messenger, 24 Oct 1992.*

● On 2 October 1992, Jan Morris answered the telephone at home in Llanystumdwy, Gwynedd. A man and a woman, without announcing themselves, sang in pleasant unison a verse of 'Happy Birthday to You'. They addressed the greeting to someone called Denis. They had got the wrong number. However, it was Jan Morris's birthday as well. *Independent, 3 Oct 1992.*

FILIPINO FERVOUR

Fortean phenomena from the Philippines



KNEE CAP RAIDERS

On the morning of 13 January 1993, it was found that 29 graves in the public cemetery in Barangay Sagasa, Bago City, had been broken into, and the bodies, some quite fresh, strewn around with their knee caps missing. It was believed that the patellæ or knee caps, known locally as *tuway-tuway*, were used by cultists as *anting-anting* (talismans) or to produce healing concoctions.

The cemetery caretaker said a tricycle with about eight men stopped in front of the graveyard at 9:00am on 12 January, and hammering sounds were heard until 2:00am the next morning. Police suspected a group of cultists, three of whom had been arrested and charged with the same offence in May 1991 in Pulupandan, Negros Occidental. They were set free after paying relatives of the 85 dead people they had disturbed. *The Philippine Star, 23 Feb 1993.*

FOOTPRINTS STIR RELIGIOUS FERVOUR

Human footprints in concrete and asphalt, ranging from five to seven inches in length and half an inch in depth, appeared overnight in several streets of Lucena City two days before Christmas. Traffic jams were caused by curious bystanders, and Roman Catholics lit candles near the footprints, which they believed might have divine origins. *Bangkok Post, 24 Dec 1992.*

'DEVIL' SPOTTED

On 22 January, Joy Bolante, 12, saw "a black man with a tail and horns" after she and some of her classmates burned some wood at the foot of a narra [tamarind] tree at the Camp Crame Elementary School in Quezon City. Another witness, Marilyn Umpat, described the horned figure as 'gigantic'. The next day, Joy collapsed and was sent home by her teachers. Then she regained consciousness and with a man's voice shouted "There is no God!".

On the morning of 27 January, five other pupils started acting strangely and soon 15 others collapsed. Priests and relatives said they were talking in various voices and showed 'extraordinary strength'. The children were rushed to a nearby Roman Catholic chapel where a priest dabbed them with holy water and said prayers. *People's Journal Tonight (Philippines), 28 Jan; [Reuters] 29 Jan 1993.*

MARY CRIES BLOODY TEARS

On 11 February, on the Feast Day of Our Lady of Lourdes, hundreds of devotees saw a wooden statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary shed tears of blood at an altar in Baringay San Antonio, Agoo, La Union. The sun allegedly 'danced' ('a universal sign of Mary's presence') and a luminous white cloud hung over the head of the young visionary Judiel Nieva during a bright, cloudless day. Hours later at the Agoo Basilica, many saw at close range the dried blood on the statue's eyes, cheeks, lips, neck and chest. Her white, flowing robes had bloodstains. According to Father Roger Cortez, appointed spiritual director for the young visionary, the statue had wept blood six times. *People's Journal Tonight, 11 Feb; Manila Bulletin, 13 Feb 1993.*

INCORRUPTION

Jose Ilagan, 86, of San Luis, Batangas, suddenly succumbed to an unknown illness on 16 November 1972, and was embalmed and buried in the family crypt three days later. The crypt was opened in 1978 to bury one of his sons-in-law, and it was discovered that his body had not decomposed. They dressed the body in new clothes and placed it in a new coffin. When Ilagan's widow died in 1985, the old man's tomb was reopened and the body found to be still fresh. He was again dressed in new clothes and placed in a new casket. This time a new tomb was built on top of the old one.

On 10 January 1993, the tomb was opened again after Ilagan's daughter, now a resident of Rizal province, complained of having strange dreams.

The body appeared to be intact, including the hair, nails and penis. However, some deterioration was noticed in the eyeballs, and the body weight had been reduced to about three kilos.

The body was moved to the church and large crowds came to see and touch the 'miracle'. Sceptics maintained that the preservation was due to an unusually large amount of formalin in the body. The family intended to take the remains back to the old house in the barrio and build a glass crypt for it. *People's Journal Tonight, 13 Jan 1993.*

FLUTTERING BY

According to the Biological Records Centre – a vast archive of data on British wildlife at the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology, at Monks Wood, near Huntingdon – many species of moths and butterflies are hatching earlier and extending their range northwards further and faster than some plants. Something similar, it seems, happened whenever this part of the world warmed up after various ice ages, and is taken as an indication of climatic change.

May 1992 saw an 'unprecedented' migration of large numbers of butterflies of many species recorded in Northern Ireland, including Clouded Yellows, and the earliest ever sighting of a Speckled Wood. About the same time (mid-May), naturalist Tristan ap Rheinallt saw Clouded Yellows on the Isle of Arran; these visitors, usually blown over from the Mediterranean, are rarely seen so far north.

A massive invasion of East Anglia by the Cabbage White occurred in July 1992. Stephen Piotrowski, the official butterfly recorder for Suffolk, reckoned their numbers could be 50 times higher than usual. They were blown on winds from France and the Low Countries, and appeared to be dispersing inland.

A swarm of white butterflies, heading for England, encountered off Normandy in July 1903.

That last report prompted a letter from A.W. Kimberley, of Colchester, pointing out that such invasions are not always one-way. "On July 16, during a three-hour passage in a yacht between Dungeness and Dover, some three to five miles offshore, I observed a continuous flow of Cabbage Whites moving out to sea towards France. They were flying 6-10 feet above the waves in good weather conditions with a light cross-wind from the SW, so their movement towards France was a deliberate one. They were not blown across."

Times, 13 Aug, Butterfly Conservation News 51, Arran Banner, 30 May, D.Telegraph, 29+31 July 1992.

WOOLLY COMFORTERS

Teams of women and brownies in Washford, Somerset, spent weeks knitting gaily-coloured 'birdigans', with 'arm'-holes for oily wings, after an appeal went out to make coats for the puffins and guillemots recovering in Inverkeithing bird sanctuary, Fife, after the *Braer* Shetland oil spill. It is not stated who made the appeal.

Officials at the sanctuary, run by the Scottish RSPCA, threw away the 100 miniature body-warmers. "They overheat the birds and they start preening them and ingesting the material", explained Sandra Hogben, the sanctuary manager. "They also unbalance the birds because they're not used to wearing coats and they fall over."

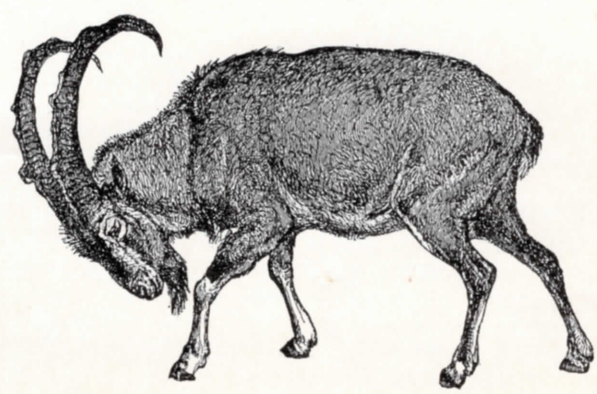
The RSPCA's attitude annoyed the birdigan's inventor, Jim Ward, a veteran seagull rescuer in Scarborough, North Yorkshire. Only last year, after an oil spill off the South African coast, wildlife experts asked Mr Ward for a knitting pattern and put hundreds of Zulus to work making dwarf jumpers for their own oil-slicked birds. *D.Mail, 20 Feb; Independent, 23 Feb 1993.*

GOAT NEWS

● Three months after Uganda's talking goat [see ***FT66:9***], another one appeared in Jamaica. It spoke to Miss Adele Brown of St Anne's Bay and her mother as they collected pa fruit near Albany. The goat prophesied that unless the Green Party of Jamaica came to power very soon the destruction of the planet would accelerate. They asked the goat what they should do and it said: "There are no limits to creativity and no limits to subversion. Vote for any candidate opposed to the Year 2000 Party." Then it wandered off into the trees. *Brisbane Telegraph, 16 Sept, via Private Eye 6 Nov 1992.*

● Dennis the beer-swilling goat, one of the more innocent victims of South Africa's political violence, was offered a dignified farewell to the Great Pasture in the Sky by a white animal-lovers group. Dennis, inseparable companion of self-styled Zulu warrior Xolani Sabelo, was a regular on the pub circuit of Umlazi, a picturesque but dishevelled settlement in Zululand, until he was strangled by marauding killers last August. *[AFP] 1 Sept 1992.*

● Ringo, an 18-month-old billy goat, had sired 45 kids by September last and also produced a fresh glass of milk every night. Farmer François Ruiz of Port-Vendres in south-western France said that the rare hermaphrodite goat had two small nipples near its male genital organs. *[AFP] 5 Sept 1992.*



RASPUTIN LIVES!

Faith healer Boris Zolotov claims the power to induce orgasms by thought alone. Women from all over Russia attend the sexual healing seminars in provincial cities. The press brands Zolotov a 'sex maniac' and the Russian orthodox church accuses him of breaking up marriages and associating with the devil.

Four hundred followers warm up for a session at a 'pioneer' camp outside Zelenograd, near Moscow. A huge communal bed is covered with mattresses and blankets. A sea of tracksuited bodies writhes in unison to American soul music and the air is dense with the smell of sweat. Zolotov, a tall, chunky man with blond hair, dressed in jeans and shirt, believes that man's role is to make women happy. He bellows "Who wants an orgasm?" Dozens of women scream back, "I do!" He strides about waving his hand like a conductor and grimacing with concentration. As the music pulsates, everyone gathers in a large circle. One by one, women and men jump into the ring, flinging themselves about to the throbbing beat in a feverish ecstasy. The music stops abruptly, leaving about 50 devotees lying in a heap, moaning. About 30 appear to have had a sexual climax. (We are not told about the remaining 350.)

Then Zolotov makes them 'speak in tongues' – supposedly French and Chinese. They scream and mutter gibberish. Some followers say that after intensive work with Zolotov, they can communicate and induce orgasms with one another by telepathy. They say it beats ordinary sex with a partner. Zolotov means 'gold' and he calls his method 'The Golden Way'. Most of his followers are women between 20 and 30. Graduates receive qualification certificates, which they say are accepted in Russian hospitals.

"Some women have massive orgasms, they fall in love with him and project their fantasies on to him", said one participant, Australian psychiatrist Adam Rosenblatt. "He releases their creative energy and some start to write poetry and draw." Zolotov, a married man with a family, hugs and kisses the women. He analyses their poems and pictures, which are eventually displayed in an exhibition. Seminars cost £20, an average monthly wage; but in Zelenograd nearly half slip through without paying. *South China Morning Post, 29 Nov 1992.*

GIRL WITH X-RAY EYES

In the summer of 1991, Georgian schoolgirl Maiko Ramishvili, 14, complained of headaches and started describing to her mother, a professor of biology, the internal organs of the human body in graphic detail. By the autumn, with just a slight effort, she could 'see' all the internal organs in a person and even a network of acupuncture dots. By massaging these 'black spots', Maiko improved the health of everybody she worked on.

A more graphic, if rather less useful, talent was her ability to magnetise books as well as plastic and metal objects. In her palm, a pen could be made to dance to a tune 'independently'. 'Experts' blustered obscurely about her "ability to sense high-frequency fluctuations". *Soviet Weekly, 24 Oct 1991.*

For other women with X-ray eyes, see ***FT49:8*** + ***FT57:27***; and for 'magnetic' Russians, see ***FT59:11***.

VAMPIRE NEWS

■ The Vampire Anti-Defamation League (VADL), launched by the Ghost Story Society, is concerned to correct pejorative horror-fiction terminology to help eliminate 'prejudice against otherly-abled individuals in our society'. It proposes that 'vampire' be replaced by 'nutritionally-hæmatologically challenged person' and 'zombie' by 'otherly-animate individual of Haitian origin'. *Sunday Times, 18 Oct 1992.*

■ On 16 June 1992, Mark Heggie, 23, of Kentish Town in London, was sent to a secure mental hospital for an unlimited term by a judge at the Old Bailey. On 27 July 1991, the day after making bail from a burglary charge, he stole drink, got plastered and met fellow Scot Alison da Costa, 63, in the Royal Free Hospital in Hampstead.

She took him to her house in Golders Green, where he attacked her with a pipe and length of metal tube, with which he tried to garotte her. Thinking she was dead, he drank the blood from her head wounds before running into the street covered with blood, where he was arrested. He told police he had always tried to find work in abattoirs so that he could drink blood. *Independent, 1 Feb + 17 June; Camden New Journal, 6 Feb 1992.*

■ A 'vampire' was caught in the act in the Hungarian town of Debrecen in July. The 22-year-old unemployed man had bitten a goat's neck open and had sucked out its blood almost to the last drop. When caught in the act by the goat's owner, he was so drunk he couldn't even say his name. After sobering up, he was unable to explain his behaviour. *Die Tageszeitung (Germany) 14 July 1992.* [For other recent vampire cases, see ***FT58:6.***]

■ Mohammad Ali, 26, of Barking, Essex, was jailed for six years last year for biting a lump of flesh out of a policeman's neck while resisting arrest after he had been speeding on the M11. *D.Telegraph, 1 April 1992.*

■ According to an opinion poll published in *Russky Sever*, the local paper in the northern Russian city of Vologda, what the local people feared most were vampires – specifically the 'energy vampire', a supernatural beast whose greatest delight is to suck people's 'life energy'. Running a close second were witches and black magic, followed by 'silly bosses and their stupid orders'. Three of the 40 questioned said that they feared an earthquake, a flood or the arrival of aliens from outer space; while four told the poll they were afraid of nothing. *[AP] 14 Nov 1992.*

MYSTERY OF THE ORIENTEER

Orienteering, the tough cross-country sport that crosses fell-running with map-reading, breeds some of the world's fittest athletes. In the last three years, however, a mystery illness has killed seven of Sweden's top competitors, forcing the national teams of Sweden and Denmark to stop training while doctors investigate the problem.

The latest death, in the first week of November, was that of Swedish international orienteer Melker Karlsson. Karlsson, 23, collapsed in a post-training sauna, and after hurried consultations, doctors ordered 200 other top athletes to suspend their training programmes.

The precaution seems to have been taken because Karlsson's death did not fit the pattern medics thought was appearing. Suspicions had fallen on a respiratory condition known as Taiwan Acute Respiratory Infection, which can kill if the infection spreads to inflame the heart muscle. But Stig Carlsson of the Swedish Orienteering Association admitted: "The doctors said one thing is clear: this sudden death can't be explained merely by TARI. There must be another reason."

The Swedes report that all of the dead athletes had previously exercised while feeling ill, but further research is to be done on animal-borne infection and to test links between the deaths and the taking of baths after exercise (a theory that somehow smacks of the 19th century). In the meantime, doctors will also have to establish whether the mystery illness is unique to orienteers or whether the problem was noticed among the athletes simply because they were under closer medical supervision. *Independent on Sunday, 15 Nov 1992.*

THE FAR SIDE By GARY LARSON

"Well, Donald — forgot your sun block, I see."

PRIMATE STRIPPERS

An anonymous French tourist was strolling with his wife in the orangutan sanctuary in Sandakan, Borneo, on 16 October 1992, when Raja, a 14-year-old male orangutan grabbed him and stripped him naked. The ape didn't disturb his wife. The Frenchman, in his 30s, kept still for fear of being attacked. Raja fled into the forest with trousers, shirt and underwear, while the tourist rushed to the park office where someone lent him a pair of trousers.

A park official said that Raja was not violent, but could be 'inquisitive' at times. It was the first time such an incident had happened at the sanctuary. He advised visitors not to wear clothes which could be removed easily. *[AFP] 21 Oct 1992.*

Two months later, a pack of wild monkeys apparently desperate for food raided a Japanese village northwest of Tokyo and made off with men's and women's underwear from a washing line. *Edinburgh Eve. News, 15 Dec 1992.*

HOUSE-NAPPER

Someone – or something – has been stealing houses – one from northern Russia and the other from New Zealand. In the first case, a man arriving at his country retreat near Arkhangelsk, on the White Sea, found the entire building stolen, complete with outhouses and fences, leaving just a vegetable patch. Two months later, an entire house disappeared from its site on forestry land at Pipawi, New Zealand. Police were holding a suspect. *Leicester Mercury, 31 Aug; Sunday Mail (Scotland) 4 Oct 1992.*

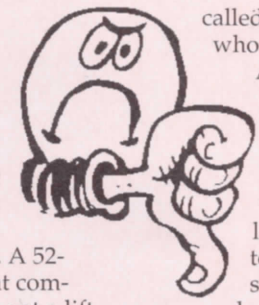
A few years ago, we noted the disappearance of two bridges, both complete, one from Wales and the other from Uruguay. Perhaps, on some alien planet, a museum curator has just added to his collection of artifacts from our solar system.

THE MOTHER OF ALL SLIME MOULDS

Slime moulds, those strange carnivorous fungi neither wholly plant nor wholly animal, usually weigh an ounce or two. Some which can move several centimetres a day have been found on rotting wood, while one soared into space in January 1992 on the shuttle Discovery so its daily rhythms could be measured. Now Xinhua, the Chinese official news agency, have announced the discovery of one weighing 77lb. Spotted in a river in Shaanxi province in August 1992, it put on 22lb in three days.

"It is usually found in cool, moist and dark places such as grassland, rotted logs and withered leaves" said the agency report, "and it can move across the ground slowly on its own. Its flesh is pure white with explicit layers, and it feels soft." The news caused ripples of delight and disbelief among slime mould specialists. A 77lb mould would be the size of a small donkey or a large dog, trailing spaghetti-like tendrils. Professor John Bonner of Princeton said that he could not image one of that size. Slime moulds surge backwards and forwards like waves at the shoreline. In lab tests, they surge towards food. "They are the physiological equivalent of the wolf pack", said Professor Bonner. *[Reuters], Guardian, 14 Oct 1992.*

NOT THEIR DAY



■ Doctors in California hit a snag with a prototype electronic implant which helps impotent men rise to the occasion by remote control. A 52-year-old patient complained that he got a lift every time his neighbours used their electronic car doors. *D.Record, 23 Oct 1992.*

■ A 36-year-old man who had lost his memory asked police in Hamburg to find out who he was. He wished he hadn't bothered when they discovered he was wanted for fraud and arrested him. *D.Star, 21 Jan 1993.*

■ Note from a recent *Lloyd's List*: "The average seal rehabilitated after the Exxon Valdez oil spill had $80,000 spent on it. Two of the most expensive were put back into the bay at a special ceremony. Within two minutes they were both eaten by a killer whale." *Observer, 4 Oct 1992.*

■ During the body count of the *Braer* oil disaster off the Shetlands, the corpses of four sea otters were brought in, but only one was found to have died as a result of the oil. 'Natural causes' did for two more, and the fourth was run over by a Norwegian film crew reporting the disaster. *Independent, 19 Jan 1993.*

■ According to *Police* magazine, a suspicious-looking cardboard box was recently found outside a Territorial Army centre in Bristol. The TA called the police, who called an Army bomb disposal unit, which blew the box up – to find it full of leaflets on how to deal with suspicious-looking packages. *Independent, 20 Jan 1993.*

■ A telegram firm were obliged to pay £1,000 damages by a Filipino court for sending a death condolence message in a birthday card… in a Christmas envelope. *D.Record, 3 April 1991.*

■ Village policeman Marc Fagny, 48, from Arlon in Belgium, was sent to shoot a rabid Alsatian – and killed the woman who owned it instead. At his trial for manslaughter, he said that everybody in the village knew he couldn't shoot straight. *D.Record, 12 Oct 1991.*

■ A man was so annoyed when a fortune teller forecast he would go to jail that he shot him, for which he was jailed in Naples. *Sun, 13 Jan 1992.*

■ A Dutchman who went into hospital to be circumcised awoke to be told by doctors that he had been given a vasectomy because of a mix-up in patient cards. "He was getting married and went to the hospital to get his circumcision done by professionals", said a spokeswoman for the Dutch patients' rights group. The man's reaction is unrecorded. *[Reuters] 4 Sept 1992.*

DANIELLE & THE LYON DEN

French police and the local media spent more than three months chasing their tails last summer in an attempt to solve the mystery of an apparently deaf-and-dumb teenage girl who turned up in Paris and whom they believed might have been the victim of a sect of witches. All they knew about the girl, who wrote her name as Danielle Sanchez, came from a series of drawings she executed for them. In one, she showed herself weeping as her mother kills her pet cat and collects its blood in a container. In another, her mother and a group of hooded 'witches' gather to sacrifice animals.

'Danielle' also drew herself being forced to take part in a ceremony while bound to a bed, lying on a floor while her mother stands holding a syringe and a key, and in a hospital undergoing a brain scan while her father watches her.

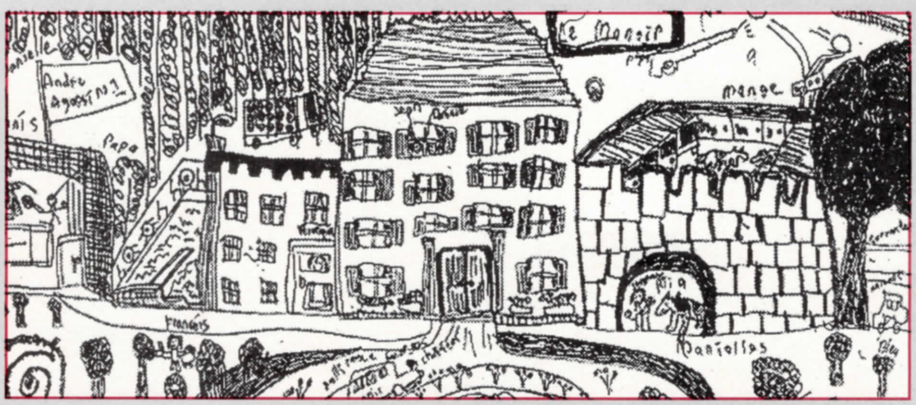
All police could say for sure was that not all the information in the girl's pictures checked out. One of the most elaborate showed her in a chateau complete with vineyards, tennis court, stables and a swimming pool; it was captioned "Danielle Sanchez, the big manor in Lyon". But a thorough check of the area failed to turn up a similar building, or anyone who knew the girl.

'Danielle' first turned up in Paris one night in August. She was wearing designer clothes with the labels cut out, and carried two cuddly toys in a rucksack and about 70 francs in cash. A brief spell in a psychiatric hospital showed that while the girl appeared to be deaf-and-dumb, she had no knowledge of sign language or hearing aids.

Police suspected the girl might actually be able to hear, but that she had been struck dumb with shock. The authorities seemed unsure whether 'Danielle' was really the victim of a cult or simply had an active imagination, but they treated her as a possible kidnap victim.

There was a parallel case in 1988. A young mute boy turned up in Mexico, unable to give even a name; he drew pictures that suggested he might have been the survivor of an air crash. After a nine-month investigation, the boy was identified as a runaway from Tampico with an active imagination [***FT54:5***].

Sure enough, further investigation revealed that 'Danielle' was Karen Ponsford, a weighbridge manager's daughter from Crediton, Devon. She was seeing a consultant psychiatrist near her home but was not, apparently, in institutional care. Informed by her French doctors that they now knew who she was, she still declined to talk, but indicated in writing she would like to go home. How Karen got to France and why she went there remain a mystery. *Today, 10 + 26 Nov 1992.*



One drawing shows a vast chateau with cars and servants. 'Danielle' (pictured top) is at a fourth-floor window

RIVERS OF BLOOD

Villagers in Three Crosses, West Glamorgan, awoke to find their gardens swamped in blood. Lawns and pavements were red and an awful stench filled the air. Blood from an abattoir seeped from drains, "officials believe". *D.Star, 6 Oct 1992.* We are not told whether there *was* an abattoir in the vicinity… Perhaps clippers of the local press could provide us with more data.

GONE WITH THE WIND

A girl of nine was playing at Songjiang, near Shanghai, when a whirlwind lifted her into the air and set her down unhurt in a treetop almost two miles away, according to an official Chinese newspaper, the *Xinmin Evening News. D.Mail, 22 July 1992.* We were reminded of a Reuters report of 30 May 1986: a freak wind lifted 13 children into the air in the oasis of Hami in western China, depositing them unharmed in sand dunes and scrub 12 miles away.

SINGING OUTBREAK

Last summer, psychologists were sent to a village in northeast India to investigate strange behaviour by residents. Tripura State Health Services Director K.L. Roy said some people in Garo Para village had been behaving abnormally for several days. They would sing, dance and cry until exhausted as though affected by mass hysteria. Others had fled the village in panic. *Edinburgh Evening News, 31 Aug 1992.*

A STING IN ITS TAIL

A remarkable new species of bird, unlike any other, was discovered accidentally by American biologists working in New Guinea. The feathers, skin and flesh of the starling-sized hooded pitohui, *Pitohui dichrous* are saturated with a powerful natural poison. They were found, over a period of two years, trapped in nets intended to catch birds of paradise.

John Dumbacher, of the University of Chicago, said: "We were trying to release them as quickly as possible, but they were able to cut our hands with their sharp beaks and claws. They are pretty feisty." When he licked his wound his mouth began to tingle and go numb. The other scientists reported similar effects. The immediate reaction was numbness, burning and sneezing.

The poison was identified as a neurotoxin containing *homobatrachotoxin*, 10mg of which is enough to kill a mouse or frog. The only other creature known to produce it is the poisonous frog whose secretions are used by hunters in South America on their arrows and blow-darts. Local people, of course, already knew the bird; they called it a "rubbish bird" because it was not worth catching to eat.

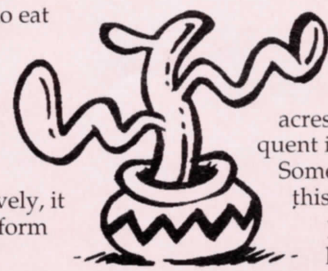
Two other types of pitohui were found – the rusty and the variable pitohuis – but neither were as poisonous as the hooded variety. The toxin is thought to have evolved as a defence, because snakes and hawks tend to leave them alone; there are even birds which mimic the pitohui's distinctive black and orange markings to share this defence. It seems to demonstrate the mystery of convergent evolution. But how did the pitohuis acquired the ability to synthesize the toxin in the first place, and at the same time develop immunity to their own weapon?

Sources: *Science 28 Oct; Times, D. Telegraph, Int. Herald Tribune, New Scientist (and many others), 31 Oct 1992.*

MASS-MURDERING PLANTS

Meat-eating vegetables – like Venus fly-traps – have always provided Forteans with a giggle. They fascinate by inverting the usual predatory arrangements, which is what makes a report in last August's *Nature* rather interesting. It sheds new light on how dinoflagellates (single-celled algae, a major constituent of plankton) are responsible for the 'red tide' phenomenon which can kill fish in their millions.

A 'red tide' occurs mostly in the spring when the algae bloom in abundance; occasionally they produce massive clouds of toxins which poison all the fish in the vicinity, and sometimes also the humans who eat shellfish contaminated with those toxins. Until now, it was thought that the toxin cloud was a defence against huge shoals of fish, but the work of JoAnne Burkholder and colleagues at the North Carolina State University, in Raleigh, shows that if these tiny single-celled plants had a mind, collectively, it would have the mass-murder of another lifeform in it.



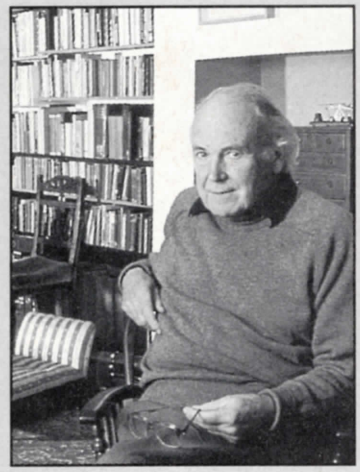
The algae lurk dormant in the mud of tidal rivers until they detect (it is not said how) large schools of fish in their vicinity. They are not fooled, it seems, by crabs or shellfish, but are only excited by their herbivorous finny enemies. They drift up out of the mud, floating to the surface, exuding a powerful nerve-poison as they go. As the fish succumb, the toxin causes their skin to disintegrate. What happens next has been described as an orgy of gluttony and sex on a scale that beggars the imagination. The dinoflagellates gorge themselves on skin particles, then mate in countless millions, and their progeny sink back into the ooze awaiting their turn.

Observers have noted that 'red tides', and their characteristic billowing acres of rotting fish, have become more frequent in American estuaries in the last 20 years. Some marine biologists have suggested that this might be because the voracious piscivors are actually thriving on the phosphates polluting the rivers.

OBITUARY:

BRIAN INGLIS

21 July 1916 — 11 February 1993



I had put in a phone call from Brian out there in the 'beyond' – but after discussions with his sceptic friends (there were many of them at his 'wake', most going back to his days as Editor of *The Spectator*), it was decided that nothing less than a fax from Brian would do to convince them that he was right after all.

That, however, would not be Brian's style. In all my 15 years of knowing him, nothing paranormal ever happened to him. The closest he ever came to experiencing phenomena was secondhand, through his association with the psychics Uri Geller and Matthew Manning, to whom he gave an arm of friendship, staunchly standing up for them in the press whenever their detractors had a go at them. He used to greatly enjoy describing the David Dimbleby TV show with Geller that launched his career in the UK. At the press meeting afterwards he was standing with the other journalists while Geller demonstrated his metal-bending. He watched a colleague suddenly slap his hand to his trouser pocket and with horror bring out his door keys. One had bent.

An historian by training, Brian's main contribution to psychic research was to provide an in-depth history of the paranormal. He completed two volumes, taking readers from early civilisation to the present day. He was well aware of the difficulties of the task. As he put it in his introduction to volume one: "The supernatural presents a problem, because one man's facts are another man's superstitions."

And that was exactly the reception given to the book. Bernard Levin saw it coming. In his review of *Natural and Supernatural* in *The Times* (1978) he described his old friend and ex-colleague's technique as 'ruthless overkill'. "He has piled up a mountain of evidence, searchingly examined and scrupulously evaluated, so gigantic, multifarious, honestly attested and unshaken, that [..] it is simply not possible [..] for any sane person to deny that there have been a vast, an unaccountable, number of supernatural happenings [..] Yet it will be done [..] [because of] the terror that seems to seize many intelligent and large-minded people at the suggestion that the universe may contain, may even run on, principles either beyond their control or their understanding."

Brian's response was to begin classifying the 'sceptocæmia' as he called it. There was, for example, retrocognitive dissonance. This described how someone could first witness a paranormal event (such as a poltergeist phenomenon or metal-bending) and declare it for real, but subsequently deny that it took place. It happens a lot. Professor John Taylor is an example. He appeared on the original Geller-Dimbleby show and was totally overwhelmed by what he saw. He set himself to research the child metal-benders who had watched Geller on TV and started to copy him. Several years later, retrocognitive dissonance set in. He could not prove that electromagnetic phenomena had 'caused' the metal-bending; as there was no other explanation that he could find in science, the phenomenon did not exist.

Brian admitted his own mild version of the disease. He would on occasion come up against his 'boggle threshold', a term coined by the late Rene Tickell describing that point – different for each of us – at which we say: "No, that defies my commonsense; it cannot be."

He never, though, saw himself as a fighter for causes; and was embarrassed when *The Daily Telegraph*, in the headline to an article on alternative medicine he wrote in January this year, described him as 'an enthusiast'. Another label he shied from was that of 'believer'. "I don't know", was his reply to anyone who – over a jar or two at his flat in Belsize Park – tried pushing him for a statement about the existence of God, or purpose, or other grand themes. It was, rather, his integrity – together of course with his Irishness, that drove him on. He would never let go of an issue, no matter how unpopular that might make him. But he also relished academic argument; no scientist would be allowed to get away with a sloppy argument or mechanistic assumption.

His third volume on the history of the paranormal was to be different. He had, he wrote last July in the introduction, at last seen the very changes happening to science that he had worked so hard for. The new statistical methods of meta-analysis meant scientific (though grudging) admission of evidence of paranormal phenomena. Rigorously conducted trials could be individually dismissed – for all sorts of reasons (statistical error and fraud being the most popular); but taken as a whole they were now acceptable. More importantly, Brian believed, the assault on scientific materialism was now happening from within. In particular, developments in physics had meant that the old way of viewing paranormal phenomena as somehow taking place at the interface of mind and matter was no longer relevant. The stuff of the world is all 'mind stuff'. He was now to 'explore psi as if the new paradigm were in place'.

... Fax me, Inglis.

Ruth West *February 1993*

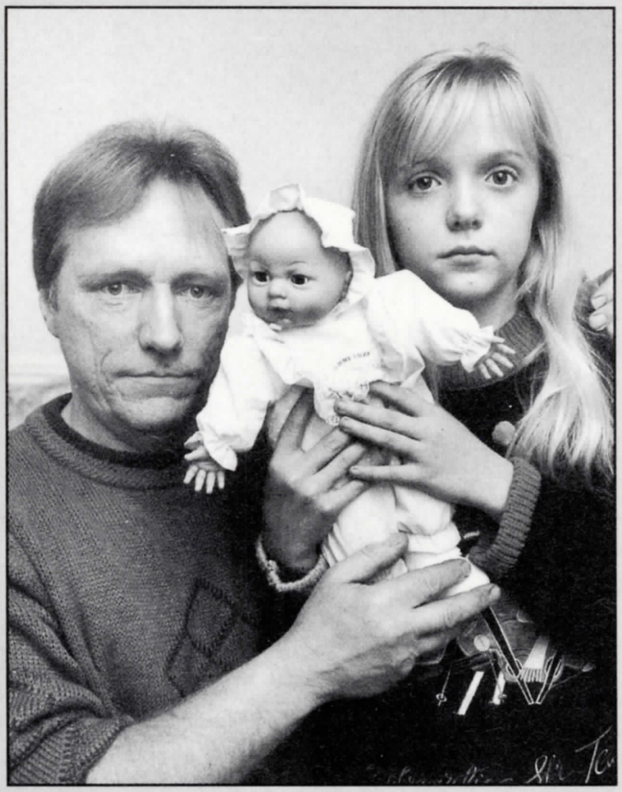
THE 'AYE-UP' GHOST

Susan Griggs, 42, rented a terraced house in Agincourt Road, Buckland, Portsmouth, from the Portsmouth Housing Association in August 1991 and moved in with her daughters Nicola, 23, and Sarah, eight, and Nicola's daughter Jasmin, who is now two. Poltergeist activity started a month later, when they began to decorate. A year later, Nicola told the local press that Jasmin had befriended a ghost and she asked for the family to be rehoused.

Medium Ron Pomroy and his colleague Margaret have told Nicola that the ghost is "a miserable old sod" called Percy and comes from the North. He once lived in the house and promised to look after it after his wife died. "No-one round her says 'aye-up' to Jasmin" said Nicola, "but that's how she answers me."

Ghostly activities are said to include cups of tea snatched from people's hands and thrown into a gas fire; clock hands suddenly moving on several hours; neatly-piled clothes strew over bedrooms; a kitchen chair thrown at Nicola, who was also pushed down the stairs, breaking her wrist; the oven door opening and shutting on its own; strong cooking smells when no food was being prepared; cutlery flying around and taps being turned on. The Rev Len Fox, vicar of All Saints, Portsea, blessed the house, which only made things worse. *Streetlife (Portsmouth), 27 Aug; The News (Portsmouth), 27 Aug + 31 Oct; Guardian, 28 Aug; The Big Issue, 16-29 Oct 1992.*

Jasmin Griggs with her mother Nicola in the kitchen at Agincourt Road, where she talked with the ghost



FOULMOUTH DOLL

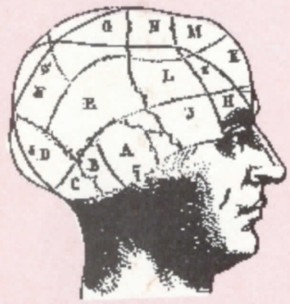
The Willis family gathered round the tree on Christmas Day to open the presents. Gemma, 10, took the wrapping off 'Tummy Talks', a round-faced, big-eyed talking doll, which was supposed to make happy gurgling noises. Instead, when she pressed its stomach, the doll shouted "Mama, mama, eff-off... ha! ha! ha!" Gemma's father John, who bought the doll at Tesco in Redditch, thought his ears were playing tricks on him, but he played it again and heard it again. "It put a bit of a dampener on Christmas", he said. "We want compensation."

In Peterlee, Co Durham, a shocked Shirley Adamson heard the same thing a week before Christmas when she checked whether the £13.99 doll she had bought from Asda for her granddaughter worked.

After Christmas, Tesco investigated the Chinese-made doll, while managers and toy buyers at Asda were forced to listen to dozens of Tummy Talks talking: their conclusion was that what sounded like 'eff-off' was really just a giggle with a Chinese accent. "We sell tens of thousands of these dolls" said an Asda spokesman, "and this is our first complaint." It sounds to us like an aural simulacrum. *Independent, 3 Jan 1993.*

John Willis with his daughter Gemma and the allegedly foul-mouthed 'Tummy Talks' doll.

MEDICAL BAG



YOUNG MOTHER

An eight-year-old girl became what is believed to be Mexico's youngest mother when she gave birth to a healthy boy. Mother and baby were said to be in 'perfect condition' after the Cæsarean delivery in a Guadalajara hospital on 12 January. *Edinburgh Eve. News, 15 Jan 1993.*

DIY TONSILLECTOMY

Poppy Faldmo, 21, of Salt Lake City, took out her own tonsils because she didn't have medical insurance to cover the £700 hospital bills. She spent hours every day in front of a mirror, removing the inflamed tonsils a bit at a time with nail scissors, a modelling knife and a toothache gel as an anæsthetic. Doctors say she did a perfect job. *D.Mirror, 9 Feb 1993.*

SNEEZING CURED

Nicole Kane, 9, from Greenford, could not stop sneezing for nearly two months despite visits to doctors, a hospital and a hypnotist. Then she had a tooth extracted to allow a new one to grow properly and the sneezing stopped. A doctor speculated that the new tooth might have been affecting a nerve connected to the girl's nose. *Eve. Standard, 21 April 1993.*

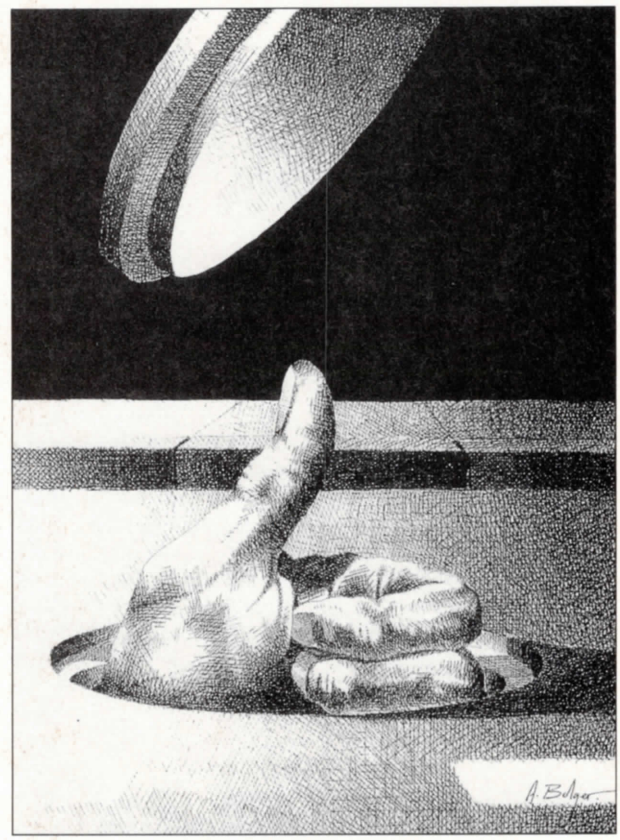
PLAGUE DEATH

A 31-year-old man from Tucson, Arizona, died after contracting pneumonic plague in rural Chaffee County, Colorado. The man's friends had several cats, one of which was sick. On 19 August, he crawled under the house in an attempt to drag the sick animal out. It was coughing, wheezing and sneezing, and died later that day. The man returned to Tucson where, four days later, he developed stomach ache, high fever, diarrhoea and vomiting. He died on 26 August, the first plague death in the United States since 1987. The disease has been confirmed last year in 21 of Colorado's 63 counties, a rate said to be unprecedented.

Usually, plague is spread by infected rodents, such as rock squirrels, mice, chipmunks and prairie dogs. Infected rodents are widespread in parts of Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon and Utah. Pneumonic plague attacks the lungs, bubonic the lymph nodes, and septicæmic the bloodstream. All three types are contracted from rodents' fleas, although pneumonic may also be spread by coughing, as in the latest fatality. Colorado usually averages two plague cases a year during plague season, which ends in October. It fluctuates in cycles of five years. There were a lot of cases in 1984-86, none in 1988-90, and then three cases late in 1991. *Denver (CO) Post, 16 Sept; Hackensack (NJ) Record, 9 Oct 1992.*

IDENTIFIED FLYING DISKS

The flying saucers in question are manhole covers which suddenly become airborne. This particular phenomenon was first identified by Mike Dash in 1990 *[**FT54:6** & **FT57:29**.]*



■ A manhole cover blew into the air in Pittsburgh after a power failure on 1 August 1991 and crashed through the windshield of a car, killing the driver, Mary Vehec, 23.

■ Minutes before a carnival procession was due to pass by on 20 June 1992, a manhole cover blew out of King's Heath High Street, Birmingham. The police quickly sealed off 150 yards of the road and diverted the procession.

■ Another one blew out of Milton Road West in Edinburgh some time in August, possibly by pressure of storm water. At least two cars were damaged after failing to spot the hole and driving into it.

■ Another one flew six feet across a pavement in Guildford Road, South Lambeth, London, on 2 September when an electrical link box under the pavement blew up. The hot lid gave severe burns to Corrine Cordner, 11.

■ At 3:00pm on 5 February, a manhole cover blasted into the air from the Greenfield Caravan Park, Lincoln, and crashed down on the roof of a bungalow 30 feet away, smashing eight tiles. Caravan park owner John Conyers had the tiles mended and the sewer tested. "It was completely clear of any gas", he said. "We just don't know what happened."

[AP] 2 Aug 1991; Birmingham Eve. Mail, 20 June; Edinburgh Eve. News, 13 Aug; South London Press, 4 Sept; 1992; Lincolnshire Standard, 12 Feb 1993.

MOMENTOUS MARROW

In September 1992, hundreds of visitors admired a strange marrow brought into the editorial office of *Calauze*, a newspaper in Deva, Romania, by a peasant who grew it in Certeja, a village in central Romania. On the marrow could be seen the letters L,I,T,D,N,R,S,I,C,D,S,U and the numbers 6,9,5,4,4. Agronomists confirmed that these were natural and not man-made. Clairvoyant Natasa Serban declared that she had decoded the letters and numbers: the letters symbolised "the struggle between good and evil" and the numbers were a code for the country which will unleash the Third World War. Ms Serban would not name the country. *Tineretul Liber, 21 Oct 1992.*

TINY SPIDER EATS WOMAN

Valerie Slimp, 39, was bitten by a Brown Recluse Spider at her home in San Bernardino, California. By the time doctors discovered what was wrong, the tissue in her legs and arms had already been eaten away and she had to fight for her life. She faced losing all her limbs.

Expert Dr Rick Vetter said: "The Brown Recluse – also known as the Violin Spider because of its shape – is more dangerous than the notorious Black Widow. A native of America's Midwest, it is so tiny that humans do not feel the bite. It can take a month before you know you are bitten." *D.Mirror, 21 Aug 1992.*

GAS GUZZLERS

Strange tube worms up to six feet long have been discovered off the Spanish coast, dining on the hydrogen sulphide from rotting beans in the hold of a ship that sank 13 years ago. Lacking mouth, gut and anus, they rely on bacteria to process the nutrients in minerals dissolved in sea water. They had been found previously in the Pacific and the Gulf of Mexico. It was thought they liked to live in huge colonies around cracks in the ocean floor where hot, mineral-rich lava pours out and areas where oil and gas leak from the seabed. *D.Telegraph, 22 June 1992.*

BREZHNEV LIVES!

After those tales of how Leonid Brezhnev was actually dead for years before he ceased to rule, it made a change to read in the Estonian paper *Esmaspaev* that there was a rumour going round Estonia that he never died at all. It seems that a body very like the Soviet leader was requisitioned from Morgue 36 in Moscow; B. Alexandrov, senior doctor at the morgue, says he was given no explanation, but was sworn to silence. Watching Brezhnev's funeral on the box later, he was amazed to recognise his former client.

The rumour goes that the old boy (then nearly 76) had fallen in love with an 18-year-old nymphet, but knew the politburo wouldn't let him ditch his wife to remarry. So, with the help of his successor, then KGB chief Yuri Andropov, he staged his own demise, and soon afterwards an elderly cove with large eyebrows, and a beautiful maiden, were sighted taking up residence in a heavily-guarded villa on Samoa. *Soviet Weekly, 15 Aug 1991.*

STRANGE DEATHS

† David Wayne Godin, 22, drowned near Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, last September as he was returning from his bachelor stag party, when his vehicle plunged into a lake. Attached to Godin's leg, courtesy of his friends at the party, was an authentic ball and chain. *Hartford (CT) Advocate, 3 Dec 1992.*

† An elderly woman in Donetsk, Ukraine, probably a vagrant, was blown to pieces near the city's railway station when she pulled the pin out of a hand grenade she had mistaken for a can of beer. Seventeen other people were injured. *Police Review, 16 Oct 1992.*

† Psychiatrist Oscar Dominguez, 45, shot dead a woman patient in his Sao Paulo office as she told him about her sex life. "I couldn't take those nutcases any more", he told a court, where he faced a 25-year sentence. *D.Star, 27 Nov 1992.*

† Hardial Singh, 41, a married hosiery knitter from Leicester, slipped and impaled himself on a broom handle as he rested on it while trying to open a window after taking a bath. The handle perforated his rectal wall, he had a colostomy the next day, but died two weeks later, probably from blood clots in his legs which had entered his lungs. *Leicester Mercury, D. Mirror, Sun, 20 Nov 1992.*

† Shy married couple Sachi and Tomio Hidaka, both 34, waited 14 years to make love – and died of heart attacks the first time they tried it. They had no history of heart trouble, according to their doctor in Chiba, Japan. *D.Mirror, 11 Oct 1992.*

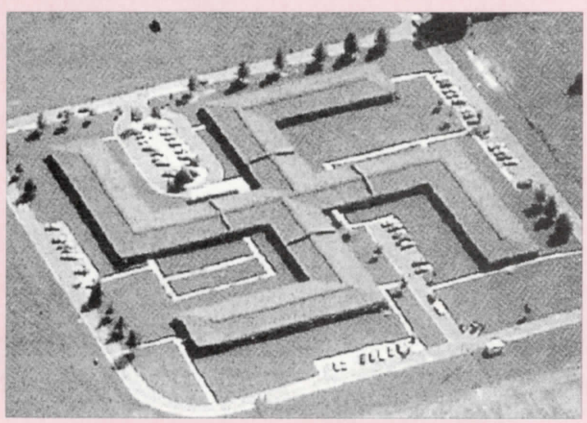
† Mrs Evelyn Houser, 70, driving near Waynesburg, Pennsylvania, struck an embankment and overturned. She escaped unhurt. As she stood near a guard-rail while police investigated, she was fatally injured by a 16-year-old firefighter who lost control of his car on his way to the accident. *Belfast Telegraph, 19 Mar 1992.*

† Charles Millbank, 25, crashed into an electricity pole on the A127 near Brentwood on 22 January and plunged over an embankment. He escaped unhurt, scrambled up the embankment, touched the 11,000 volt cable trailing across the grass and was killed instantly. *Independent, Today, 23 Jan 1993.*

† Born-again Christian Herbert Pickney committed suicide in Charleston Jail, South Carolina, by eating eight bars of soap and five cans of shaving cream. "The Lord told me to do it" he confided to warders. *Weekly News, 25 July 1992.*

CROOKED CROSS

Both these giant swastikas went unnoticed until spotted in 1992 from ærial photographs. ABOVE: a 100 metre-square of larch trees planted by a forest ranger in 1930 near Dedelow in eastern Germany. BELOW: Wesley Place, a housing complex in Decatur, Alabama, comprising 100 apartments for retired church folk. Allegedly, it achieved its final shape by accident, because funds ran out during construction in 1980-81, before the full square was completed. ***[Reuters] 3 May; [AP] 22 Sept 1992.***



IS IT A CLOUD?

Mrs Mariah Brown photographed a strange cloud - see photo - over the Cumbrian town of Sedgwick, and sent it to the *Westmorland Gazette* which published it mid-August 1992. Other sightings came forward from all over the Lake District, and the same paper (for 28 August) reconstructs its route from Hincaster to Sedgwick, then to Kendal, Selside, Stavely, Windermere and Kentmere.

It was not, as many claimed and feared, a UFO, but an unusual 'lenticular' cloud, formed by a wave action in different temperature layers of air.

More curious is the mass observation of pictographic clouds over Klang, in the Malaysian state of Selangor, on 26 July 1992. Among 26 distinct images

reported, were the word Allah (in Jawi script), a foetus in a womb, two corpses, and "women with their *aurat* (parts of their body) exposed".

The event was interpreted by devout Muslims as depicting the ascension of the Prophet Muhammad, and it will be studied by the National Islamic Centre, headed by a bigwig from the Islamic Affairs section of the Prime Minister's Department. *Straits Times (date unknown, but late July/early August 1992 likely).*

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LA ROMANTICA
STEAK HOUSE
OPEN
SCREEEEECH
OH WELL... BEGGARS CAN'T BE CHOOSERS...
SNORE
BELCH
Garlic
DAWN APPROACHES!..
BONG BONG BONG BONG BONG
!!!
RECORD SHOP
A-D
E
BOB DYLAN BLOOD ON THE TRACKS
AAAAHH....
SLURP
"meet me in the mornin'..."

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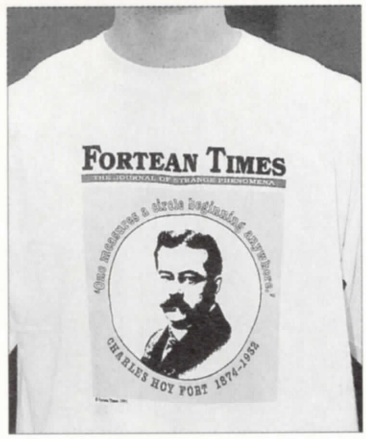

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FT53 - Crop circles, invasion of the slime creatures and Islamic simulacra.
FT58 - Lesbian vampires, trepanning today and alien abduction.
FT60 - Alpine ice man, Father Christmas as Odin and the Lake Erie monster.
FT61 - Homing treks by cats, everlasting light bulbs and social panics.
FT62 - The Piltdown Hoax, World's Heaviest Man dies and puddle - creating poltergeists.
FT63 - Crop Circle colour pull-out, acid tattoo panic and British alien big cats.
FT64 - Spielberg, Satanic witch hunts and the pregnant male hoax.
FT65 - Colour pull-out on Martian monuments, kidney kidnapping rumours and blood miracles.
FT66 - Florida's penguin panic, bogus social workers and horse-ripping.
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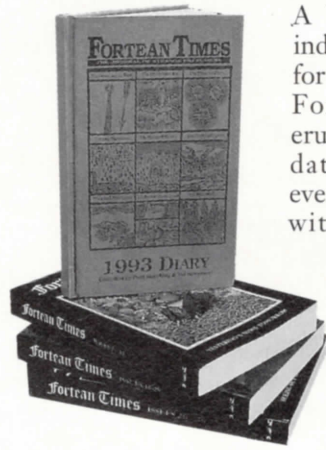

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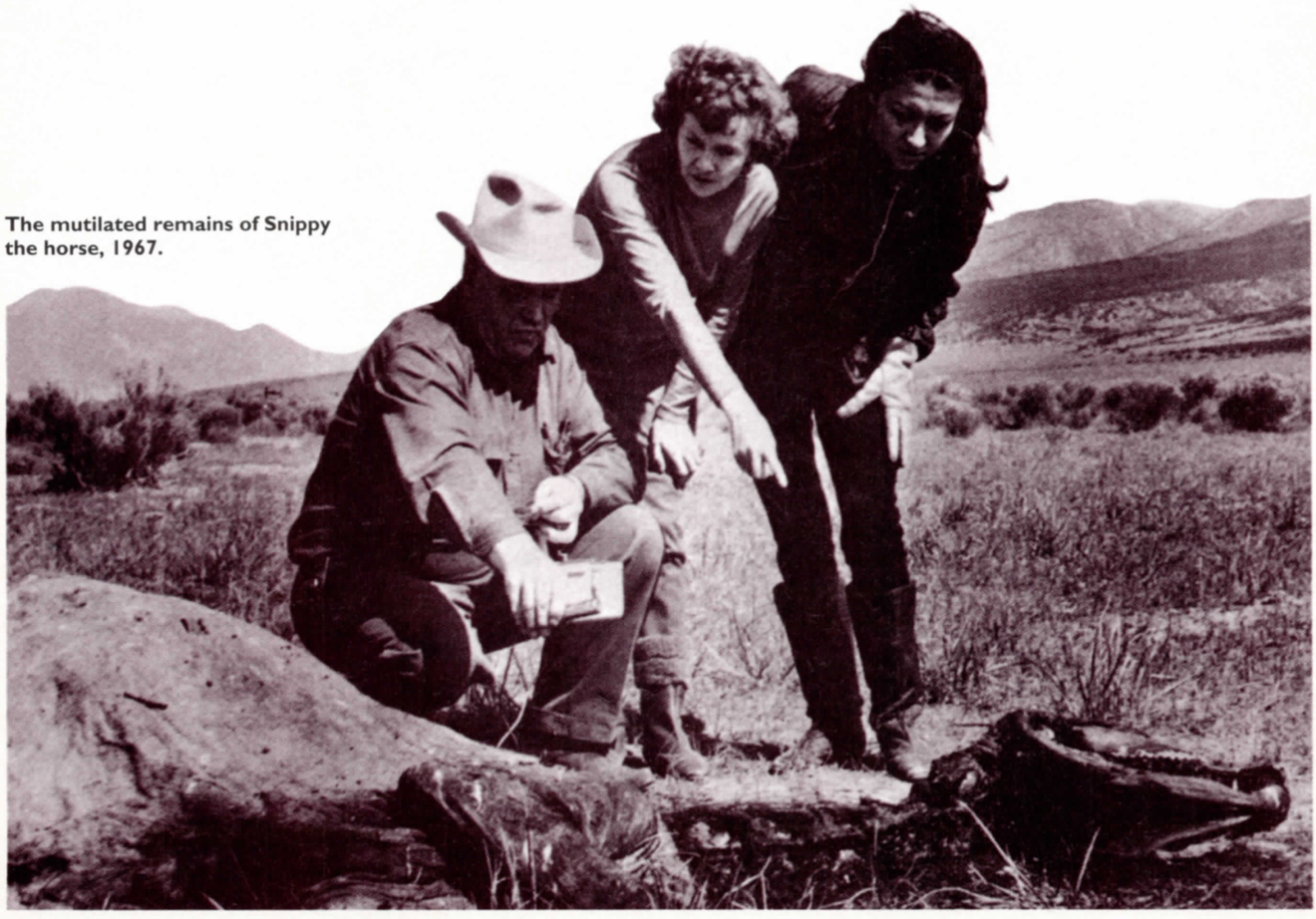
FT68

POOR COW

Throughout most of the 1970s, large areas of the American Great Plains witnessed thousands of enigmatic cattle deaths which led to much excitement, fear and speculation. Panics over waves of animal deaths date back many centuries. In 16th century France, for instance, unexplained attacks on sheepfolds led to hunts for *loup-garoux* or werewolves. Several accused persons confessed to changing into animal form and, urged on by the devil, mangling as many sheep as possible.

Charles Fort chronicled several outbreaks of livestock ripping (mostly sheep) in the 19th and early 20th century, including the horse-ripping outbreak in Wyrley, Staffordshire, in 1903, for which George Edalji was the scapegoat (see Fort's *Books* p878ff & *FT21:8*). Sometimes, 'mystery animals' such as wolves or escaped big cats are blamed.

The draining of blood, a distinctive feature of the 'classic mutilations' of the 1970s wave, was prefigured in many of the sheep deaths chronicled by Fort, and in 1966 when an Ohio dairy farmer found a number of her cows "expertly butchered in part and the bodies [..] bloodless". Similar deaths were reported in Pennsylvania. In September 1967, the mutilated body of a three-year-old horse called Snippy was found at Alamosa, Colorado. The brain was missing, the flesh on the head and neck down to the withers was totally gone, and the demarcation between the missing and the remaining flesh was described as surgically precise. The carcass was bloodless.



The mutilated remains of Snippy the horse, 1967.

PART ONE: TALES OF MADNESS AND MUTILATION

Paul Sieveking reviews a puzzling and unsavoury phenomenon that has sparked many bizarre explanations

In the summer of 1973, panic gripped north-central Kansas after a large number of mutilations of cows, most of which had black hides. Sex organs and ears had been removed. In one case, the intestines had been drawn out through a hole in the cow's side and piled neatly by its head (recalling a similar gesture by Jack the Ripper). A lengthy article in the *Kansas City Times* (22 Dec 1973) implied that 'hippies', sex fiends or satanic cults were to blame. The scare spread to Nebraska the following April and was given national prominence by *Newsweek* on 30 September 1974.

At the crest of the wave in 1976, 23 states were affected, and by the end of the decade statewide investigations had been carried out in Iowa, Oklahoma, Texas, Colorado and New Mexico; and in Canada in Alberta and Saskatchewan. In 1980, a major study by former FBI agent Kenneth Rommel concluded that nothing extraordinary was going on beyond mass hysteria. He put the deaths down to natural causes and the mutilation to natural predators. After further sceptical assessments, mass media attention tailed off, although both the mutilations and the discussion among groups of enthusiasts, exchanging photocopied documents, has continued. Most notably, no-one has ever been caught in over 20 years of American cattle ripping.

> "The 'classic' American mutilation includes the removal of sexual organs, one or both eyes or ears, the tongue or flesh of the lower jaw."

The 'classic' American cattle mutilation includes the removal of sexual organs, one or both eyes or ears, the tongue or flesh of the lower jaw. The bodies appeared to have been drained of blood and the incisions described as 'surgically precise'. Some cuts suggested a scalpel while others showed an odd 'pinking shears' effect. Some mutilations appeared to have been made without a knife, either by separating cell from cell or burning the flesh apart with a laser beam. In the more elaborate cases, the head might be stripped of flesh, the anus 'cored out' and organs such as the heart removed. There would be no tracks or footprints visible around the carcases, even on muddy or snow-covered ground, and predators gave them a wide berth. The body parts usually devoured by predators would be left intact.

The final component of the 'classic mutilation' was an associated anomalous activity such as reports of mystery animals, unmarked aircraft or strangers in robes. Chemicals like nicotine sulphate or PCP ('angel dust') were detected in some livestock corpses; in others, puncture marks were found in the jugular vein. There were also unsubstantiated rumours of radiation and burned vegetation at mutilation sites.

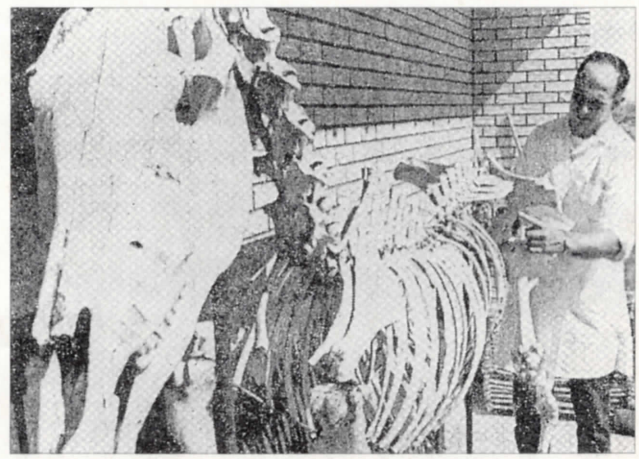
The first explanatory framework for the 1970s mutilations was the satanic cult mythology. In 1970, while researching *The Family*, his book on Charles Manson, Ed Sanders had already encountered rumours of Californian occultists who performed blood sacrifices and made 'snuff' movies. The death of a teenager in Vineland, New Jersey, in 1971, allegedly during a ritual, was linked by police to 'sacrificed' animals as part of Satanists' ordinary *modus operandi*. In 1972 the evangelist Morris Cerullo was touring the country in a 'witchmobile' warning against the dangers of Satanism and blood-drinking orgies. Sinister notes were found on some of the dead cattle, such as: "This time it's a cow, next time it will be your daughter" (Minneapolis *Tribune*, 20 April 1975). This is a strange echo of one of the anonymous letters in the 1903 Edalji case: "There will be merry times at Wyrley in November when they start on little girls, for they will do twenty wenches like the horses before next March".

The satanic scenario took its most elaborate form in the 1973 ravings of Kenneth Bankston, an inmate of Leavenworth Federal Penitentiary, accepted at face value by several police forces and even the Federal authorities, who wasted much time and money on investigations. According to Bankston, a group called 'The Occult' patrolled the Great Plains in a fleet of black, unmarked, helicopters. They would land, place large sheets of cardboard to avoid leaving footprints, stun cattle with angel dust, pump their blood out and cut off their sex organs to use in black mass sex orgies.

'The Occult' also featured in Beatrice Sparks's popular novel, *Jay's Journal* (1979), the story of a teenager enticed into New Age meditation by a satanic recruiter. After mutilating cattle and bathing in their drug-laced blood, he is possessed by a demon named Raoul and commits suicide. Details from the plot soon began turning up in stories offered to the police by self-styled 'survivors' of cults.

GOVERNMENT EXPERIMENTS

When the police found no evidence for the satanic cult scenario, investigators such as Ed Sanders and others from the prevalent counter-culture began to suspect the military-industrial complex. It is curious that the main mutilation wave started as the Vietnam war came to an



The skeleton of Snippy the horse, killed at Alamosa, Colorado. No explanation was ever found for the bizarre wounds, the missing brain and vital organs, and the skin stripped cleanly from head and neck

end. During that conflict, there were many stories circulating of body parts stripped from dead Vietnamese as grim souvenirs. (Similar rumours circulate during most wars, and surfaced again during the 1991 Gulf War). The clearest military link was the oft-reported unmarked helicopters in the vicinity of mutilations. It was thought that the blood lust of some of the war veterans, deprived of a human target, was redirected towards American cattle. However, Sanders thought the mutilations were too sophisticated to be simply the product of joyriding veterans.

After the extensive use of 'dirty tricks' was exposed in Watergate (1973), it seemed quite feasible that the government was conducting some secret programme while deflecting blame on the satanists. Active military research into poison gas and germ warfare was outlawed in 1970, as was the testing of chemical weapons on most animals in 1974, and investigators inferred that the mutilations were part of a secret government weapons testing programme. This hypothesis died on its feet when no evidence of a cover-up emerged and, in any case, it was nonsensical that the government would attract attention by randomly killing ranchers' cattle when they could have bought animals and experimented on them in secret.

ALIEN RIPPERS

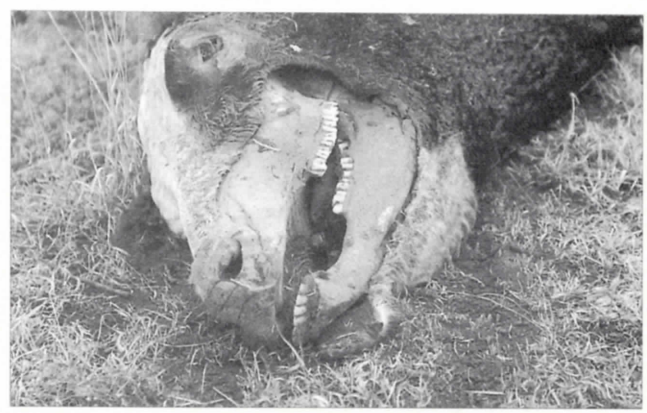
There remained the UFO scenario, one which avoided any awkward lack of terrestrial evidence. The UFO link to mutilated or kidnapped animals can be traced back to the rustlers from the land of Magonia in the clouds alluded to in the ninth century by Archbishop Agobard. The *Miami Herald* of 16 October 1973 reported that police in Dayton, Ohio, had received about 80 reports of flashing UFOs in the area, one of them from a woman who claimed 'hysterically' that a UFO had landed, killing a couple of cows.

By 1974, reports of strange lights and unmarked helicopters had become inextricably tied up with cattle mutilation reports right across the USA. In December of that year, Minnesota investigator Terence Mitchell noted a series of circles in fields near mutilated cattle. Such circles had already been interpreted as 'saucer nests' or UFO landing sites. Mitchell's circles were eventually found to be snow-covered silage, but by then the UFO link was well established in the national consciousness. UFOs could move silently at will and advanced alien laser beams could mutilate with 'surgical precision'; the *why* of mutilation, however, remained unanswered.

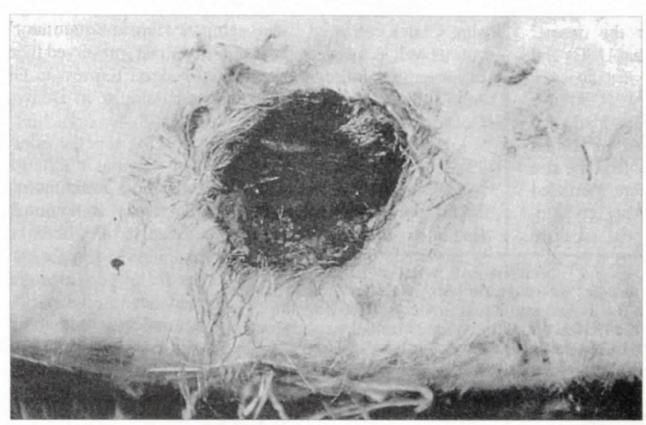
A partial resolution emerged after the hypnotic regression of UFO abductees by Leo Sprinkle and others in 1980: aliens were excising body parts from cattle and conducting medical examination of humans as part of some inscrutable biological research. This was the basic thesis of Linda Moulton Howe's award-winning documentary, *A Strange Harvest* (1980). It was assumed that the US Government had covert contact and even agreement with the EBEs (extra-biological entities). The aliens were like the witches of old, who harmed cattle and stole children; the government's collusion with these 'satanic' forces was a kind of Faustian bargain. The 'secret treaty' scenario still inspires many mutilation investigators today.

All the mythologies elaborated to explain the mutilations are part of what Veronique Campion-Vincent has called the 'immemorial fable' of the blood sacrifice: victims (usually young children) are "drained of their blood, symbol and essence of life [and] cannibalised by evil outsiders who need our vital force." Besides the literal castrations, unexplained cattle ripping gives form to inchoate fears of social impotence. Thomas E. Bearden, for instance, sensed the use of Soviet psychotronic weaponry behind the mutilation of cows, "the Western female symbol par excellence", which would culminate, he predicted, in the sexual mutilation of a human female as the prelude to Armageddon (see his 1977 article, *Species Metapsychology, UFOs and Cattle Mutilation*, **FT26:14-20**.)

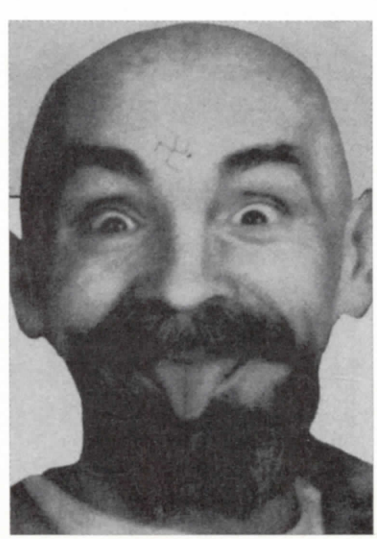
Mutilated steer, Caldwell, Kansas, photographed by Chuck Pine on Feb 3 1992.



Steer's head showing excision of jaw tissue, bone and teeth.



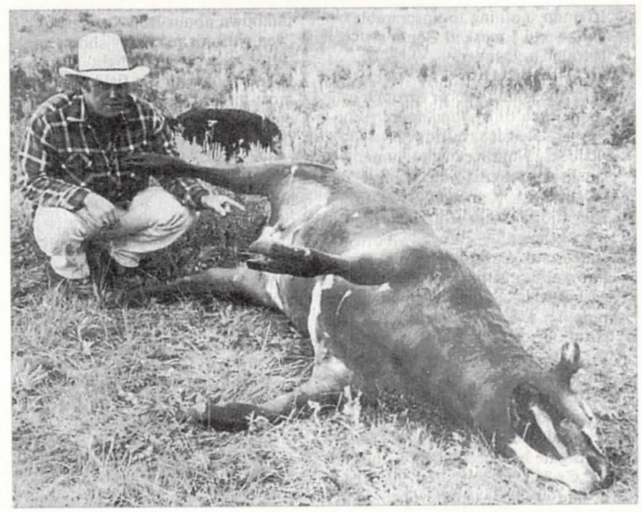
Oval cut in belly of Brahma steer, genitals removed. Calumet, Oklahoma.

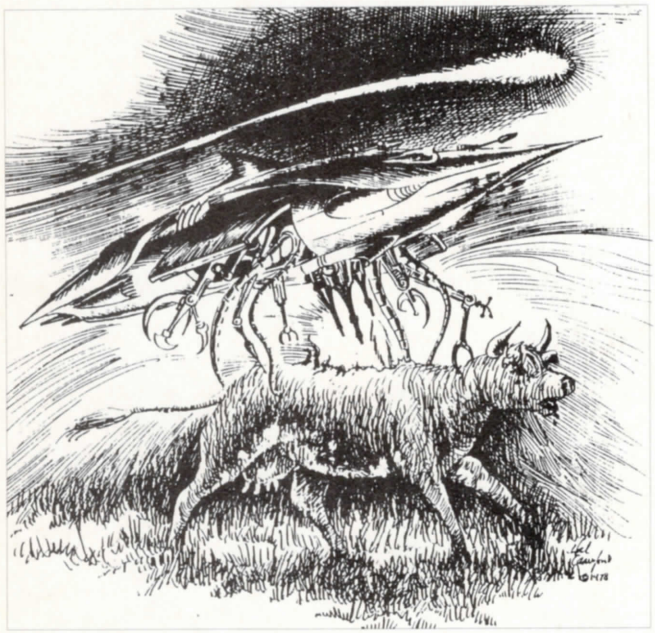


Charles Manson, whose hippy following committed some famous murders, including that of Sharon Tate in 1969 Hollywood. There were unsubstantiated rumours, current at the time, that such 'Satanic' groupings as the Manson 'Family' were performing blood sacrifices of animals and making 'snuff' movies.

RIGHT: Rancher Steve Somsen next to mutilated female cow, July 23 1989.

BELOW: The most popular theory of cattle mutilation involved aliens and flying saucers attacking the animals with bizarre weaponry.





NOTE:
Much of the material for this summary is abstracted from Bill Ellis: "Cattle Mutilation: contemporary legends and contemporary mythologies" in *Contemporary Legend* vol I 1991, the Journal of the International Society for Contemporary Legend Research, published by Hisarlik Press, 4 Catisfield Rd, Enfield Lock, Middlesex EN3 6BD. This new publication is warmly recommended.

PART TWO: KILLING THE GOLDEN CALF

Dennis Stillings, editor of *Artifex*, offers a mythical analogy

Robert Oppenheimer, chief scientist on the Manhattan Project, which produced the atom bomb in 1945.

Whether or not certain phenomena are considered anomalous or 'paranormal' depends largely on their relationship to an unconscious background matrix of folklore and mythological imagery. Certain putative anomalies, such as mysterious cattle mutilations and phantom helicopters, can be demonstrated to evoke specific images of a highly numinous quality. These collective images then provide the basis for emotional reactions to the supposed anomalies, reactions that are typical, persistent, and widespread. 'Explanations' of the phenomena will also tend to be based on these unconscious collective associations with the object or event.

In the spirit of mythopoeia, or mythmaking, I would like to tell a 'story' to illustrate how cattle mutilations and phantom helicopters have to do with the viscera-suckers of the Philippines, the North American Indian Trickster stories, the development of nuclear weaponry, and Moses and the Golden Calf.

There are few events of significance in history that do not eventually become embedded in a matrix of folkloric and mythological material. It makes little difference whether or not the event 'really' happened. To the extent that the occurrence remains unexplained, a psychological vacuum is created which is readily filled by the mythic imaginings of the human psyche.

WAR IN HEAVEN

This mythogenesis is not confined to such elusive things as Bigfoot or flying saucers; it can just as well accompany completely real and concrete manifestations. The SDI ('Star Wars') scenario, for example, is exactly analogous to the ancient notion of a War in Heaven at the end of time. The development of nuclear weapons, in their overwhelming fearfulness, in their relentless and all-pervasive influence on our economics, politics and religious thinking, can be – and has often been – compared to a return of Jahweh, a god who also appeared as a cloud and a pillar of fire. Scientific theorising is itself not free of mythological projections. Speculations upon the 'ghost planet' Nemesis [1] and 'dark matter' [2] provide some of the best examples of this.

There is a very odd relationship between helicopters and UFOs and con-

nections can be made between helicopter 'folklore' and the Trickster stories of certain North American Indian tribes. There are also some mythic and folkloric linkages between the cattle mutilation phenomenon of the 1970s and the imagery of nuclear power, also between cattle mutilations, UFOs, and phantom helicopters [3].

Mythopoeia or mythopoesis means simply 'mythmaking'. What I am going to discuss here is an instance of my own spontaneous creation of a myth and what that might imply with regard to the nature of reports of anomalies of certain kinds, which are modern pieces of folklore. The stories about anomalous cattle mutilations, which reached a peak during the middle and late 1970s, are one example; however, I believe that the relevance of what I have to say extends to other types of anomalies.

The 'classic' anomalous mutilation usually involves cattle, although there are reports of mutilated horses, pets, and even people. These mutilations involve removal of various body parts, usually the genitals or anus – which is 'cored out'. Ears, eyelids, and other regions of tissue have been removed with what is often reported to be 'surgical precision'. Skin patches may be excised in geometrical shapes. Claims are made that the animals were completely drained of blood; bones and horns have been broken as though the animal had been dropped from a height; 'clamp' marks have been reported from time to time, indicating that the beast was lifted and then dropped.

There have been a number of studies of the phenomenon (which still goes on sporadically), perhaps the most comprehensive and sceptical of which is *Mute Evidence* by Kagan and Summers [4]. There was even a small periodical on the subject called, interestingly enough, *Stigmata*.[5]

A myth can operate in the collective consciousness without any awareness of the dynamic mythological configuration that has taken root. This has been amply demonstrated by depth psychology and other disciplines. Occasionally, one or more people formulate a partial or even complete mythology based on the real or imagined facts surrounding the anomaly. This happened to me in the following way:

For several years I have studied the symbolism behind nuclear weapons and have paid several visits to such places as Three Mile Island, Lawrence-Livermore, and Los Alamos. While driving back to Minneapolis from Santa Fe, I went to Los Alamos to get the flavour of the place. As I arrived, the sun was coming up, giving an orange glow to the high desert mountains. In the draws, the ground fog was still quite heavy. My impression of all this was of a biblical landscape.

OPPENHEIMER AS MOSES

Los Alamos lies high up on a mesa that I am told has a significant religious history among the Indians. My tour of the town was brief. Nothing was open, and I didn't know anyone there. As I left to go back down the mountain, I went around a sweeping curve, giving me a panoramic view of northeastern New Mexico and (at least in my imagination) southeastern Colorado. It struck me that I was looking out at some of the really prime cattle mutilation country.

"Now, if Oppenheimer was Moses on the mountain, the Golden Calf would be in the valley. When Moses came down from the mountain after his momentous visit with Jahweh, he had the Golden Calf torn to pieces."

At that moment, it came to me that I had just left an area high on the mountain where a group of 'high priests' of science, almost all of Jewish extraction (J. Robert Oppenheimer, Leo Szilard, Jeremy Bernstein, Erich von Neumann, and many others), had invoked the presence of Jahweh as the cloud and pillar of fire of the Old Testament. There is a passage in a history of the development of the Manhattan Project where the author says, straight-faced and with no reference to the Old Testament sources: "Army searchlights were laid on to follow by simple triangulation the ball of fire by night and the mushroom cloud by day."[6]

Now, if Oppenheimer was Moses on the mountain, the Golden Calf would be in the valley. When Moses came down from the mountain after his momentous visit with Jahweh, he

had the Golden Calf torn to pieces. Here the cattle mutilations become part of the myth. The focus of cattle mutilations around Los Alamos has been noted by those who study these phenomena. They have also noticed the frequency of mysterious mutilations near nuclear sites in other parts of the country.[7]

It makes no difference to my argument whether these assertions about nuclear installations and the reports of mutilations are true or not in the ordinary sense. What is of interest is the psychic fact that such assertions are made.

Let me emphasise that these Old Testament-based fantasies were not constructions of my conscious mind. They simply came to me, like movies in the mind. I thought it all very funny and decided to write it up as one of the little joking articles I often do for Artifex.[8] But the 'joke' turned somewhat more serious upon my return to Minneapolis.

While browsing through a local bookstore, I came upon an issue of the Jungian journal *Spring* containing an article by the well-known German scholar and theologian Wolfgang Giegerich entitled, 'The Nuclear Bomb and the Fate of God: On the First Nuclear Fission.' [9] The author traces the development of nuclear weaponry and its attendant imagery and symbols from the story of Moses and the Golden Calf. The argument is well documented in the best European scholarly tradition. I was quite shocked to find this, as it echoed my bizarre fantasies.

I remained unsatisfied with the comparison between Moses and the Golden Calf, the development of the bomb and the cattle mutilations, because the Golden Calf had been made out of the jewellry of the Israelites. Where was the 'jewellry' in this parallel? Three days later, I found the answer in the *Wall Street Journal*, which contained a short article about a peculiar individual who made jewellry out of animal parts. [10] I then remembered the simple fact that we often associate jewellry with parts of the body; ruby lips, emerald eyes, the 'family jewels', pearly teeth, skin like alabaster or ivory, shell-like ears, golden hair, etc. I then thought about the mythology of the American West in general, much of which is tied up with Old Testament imagery, especially by way of Mormonism.

That an Old Testament myth might actually be operating behind the scenes to organise and energise the mass hysteria over cattle mutilations began to seem probable, especially since this mythologem had sprung up spontaneously in my own mind and had formed the theme of a scholarly essay by a German theologian. Another theologian, the ex-Jesuit Salvador Freixedo, connects UFOs and the cattle mutilations directly with Jahweh, thereby generating a myth of his own. According to Freixedo, Jahweh, no longer able to make people sacrifice animals to him, appears in the form of UFO manifestations in order to mutilate animals and obtain the blood and entrails for himself. [11]

TRICKSTER-RIPPER

These unconscious factors that organise perceptions around typical themes were termed 'archetypes' by Jung, and his theories about synchronicity are based on the conception of the archetype. According to Jungian thinking, a powerful, emotion-laden myth might be capable of generating paranormal events, such as real psychokinetic cattle mutilations. I just mention this in passing, since I am concerned here with psychodynamic processes associated with reported anomalies – not with whether they are, in fact, paranormal in nature.

I have lately extended my researches into American Indian folklore about the Trickster. Trickster is a formless entity – usually called Coyote, or Raven, or Hare – that plays all sorts of tricks on other animals and human beings. There are hundreds of Indian stories about the adventures and misadventures of Trickster. This figure is also nearly universal. One variety of Trickster is the viscera-sucker of the Philippines. [12] This disgusting creature flies about at night, extracting the organs, body fluids and foetuses of its victims by means of its long, thin, razor-sharp tongue. (Foetus extraction has also been reported in cases of cattle mutilation.)

In the Trickster lore of the North American Indian, Trickster is almost continually involved in animal and human mutilations – decapitating, skinning, and eviscerating his victims. Remarkably enough, Trickster is even described as coring out the anus of animals [13], a staple feature of the reports of cattle mutilations. The Trickster is related by Jung to the unformed, pre-adolescent ego, which occasionally constellates the Trickster archetype to such an extent that poltergeist phenomena occur.[14]

Trickster thus manifests in at least two aspects: first, he appears to be a sort of folk personification of the normal events that might lead to erroneous reports of anomalous animal mutilations. (He is, after all, called Raven and Coyote, the animals that pick at the carcasses of animals that died of natural causes.) Secondly, he is a supernatural, 'formless' entity that personifies certain reported phenomena of psychokinesis. Unfortunately, the cattle mutilation phenomenon – like that of the UFO – has not yet learned how to conform to our particular categories of behaviour.

Whatever the true meaning of the mutilations, it appears to me that certain prevalent notions deriving from both the Judeo-Christian and North American Indian traditions may well be operating on an unconscious level to organise our perceptions and ideas along certain lines consistent with the myth. The energetic quality of the anomaly emerges out of a subterranean interplay of archetypal imagery. This interplay gives rise to a whole fabric of connections with ideas of 'messages from the beyond' [15] and other apparently unrelated phenomena such as UFOs.

It is my feeling that a thorough study of such things as the Bigfoot legends and the 'abductee' cases from the standpoint of myth, folklore and current sociological and religious issues may reveal the underlying structure of these webs of relationships that touch and affect the real living psychology of the times. We may then find it easier to address the question of what sorts of reality we are dealing with and what methods are appropriate for their study.

NOTES

1 – A summary of evidence, theories, and speculations is to be found in David M. Raup, *The Nemesis Affair: A Story of Dinosaurs and the Ways of Science* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1986).

2 – Dennis Stillings: 'Images of High Numinosity in Current Popular Culture,' *Artifex* 6, 2 (April 1987), esp. 'Addendum: The Mythology of Dark Matter.'

3 – Tom Adams: *The Choppers...and the Choppers: Mystery Helicopters and Animal Mutilations*, (Paris, Texas: Project Stigma, 1980).

4 – Daniel Kagan and Ian Summers, *Mute Evidence* (New York: Bantam, 1984), pp.312, 403.

5 –*Stigmata: The Project Stigma Report on the Continuing Investigation into the Occurrence of Animal Mutilations.* Published sporadically between 1978 and 1989. Available from Tom Adams, Ed., Project Stigma, P.O. Box 1094, Paris, TX 75460.

6 – Leona Marshall Libby, *The Uranium People* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1979), p.220. Compare with Exodus 13:21: "And all the time the Lord went before them, by day a pillar of cloud to guide them on their journey, by night a pillar of fire to give them light, so they could travel night and day."

7 – Dave Perkins, *Altered Steaks: A Colloquium on the Cattle Mutilation Question* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: am here books, 1982), p.17.

8 – *Artifex* is a quarterly publication of Archaeus Project, 2402 University Ave., St.Paul, MN 55114.

9 – *Spring: An Annual of Archetypal Psychology and Jungian Thought* (1985): 1-27.

10 – *Wall Street Journal*, March 29, 1986. 'Give her Roses, but Remember That Only a Fish Head Is Forever.' Jung, in the *Visions Seminars* (Zurich, Spring Publications, 1976), p.87, analyses a dream in which the entrails are torn out of a sheep by Indians. The intestines are then draped around their necks where they change into 'great red jewels.'

11 – For a brief summary of Salvador Freixedo's ideas, see *Crux 1* (Summer 1985). Available from Tom Adams.

12 – Maximo D. Ramos, *Creatures of Philippine Lower Mythology* (Manila: University of the Philippines Press, 1971).

13 – Paul Radin, *The Trickster: A Study in American Indian Mythology* (New York: Bell Publishing Co., 1956), p.36.

14 - Radin, op cit, p. 195.

15 – The 'message' aspect of the cattle mutilation myth is put forward in different forms by Leo Sprinkle and by Thomas E. Bearden. The former sees the mutilations as a coded message from extraterrestrials (Kagan and Summers, *Mute Evidence*, pp.312, 403), while Bearden (in *Excalibur Briefing* [San Francisco: Strawberry Hill Press, 1980], p.97) sees the phenomenon as arising from exteriorised psychokinetic manifestations of the collective unconscious, the symbolism of which, in Bearden's view, refers to the threat of a Russian attack on the heartland of the United States.

AMERICAN ANIMAL MUTILATIONS 1990-1993

ARIZONA

Nov 1990 – June 1991 – eight cattle and one horse mutilated in southeastern Arizona. Udders, genitalia and anuses cut out, blood drained. Local police claimed to have found evidence of satanic cults, such as rock altars and numbered trees (!)

ARKANSAS

20 Aug 1990 – cow found in Griffin Valley with right ear, parts of the udder, anus and genitalia cut off. A lot of blood near the left ear.

2 Feb 1991 – cow found dead on James H. Thorne's farm in Berryville, Carroll County, with eyes, sex organs and tongue removed and blood drained. Ground completely undisturbed 'as if the body had just floated down to it'. Other animals refused to go near the carcass. Thorne had found a dead heifer in the same area on 4 Nov 1990, with one eye and ear missing as well as the sexual organs, anus, tongue and blood. He had lost heifers mutilated in the same way in 1978, 1985 and 1986.

A local vet maintained that the latest death was caused by blackleg, and the organs had been removed by buzzards. However, the tongue was cut off from the back of the mouth and the jaw clenched shut.

19 Oct 1991 – newborn female calf found in Wooster, with tongue, one eye and reproductive organs missing.

MISSISSIPPI

8 April 1990 – 200-pound calf found dead in Lee County, with the cornea of one eyeball and half the tongue cut out. No blood. A heifer was found in July with the left ear and 18 inches of skin from its left rib cage cleanly severed. A hole had been bored through to the heart, which had not been removed.

NORTH CAROLINA

17 Jan 1990 – cow and deer found in Cabarrus County with tongues and left eyes removed. Eight mutilations investigated in the preceding year.

2 Nov 1990 – remains of young Black Angus calf found in Gaston County with two cuts, three inches apart, from the scrotum to the neck; intestines, lungs, heart, legs and hooves removed. The hide strip was left dangling from a branch over the animal's liver and severed head.

OKLAHOMA

Jan 1992 – Kingfisher County, mid-month: three yearling heifers found drained of blood, with eyes, ears, tongues, lips, sexual organs missing. The liver was removed from one animal. Okfuskee County, 25 Jan: cow found with heart and udder removed, bloodlessly. Other mutilations in Blaine, Garfield, Grant and Kingfisher Counties. Sheriff Archie Yearick of Grant County puzzled "because there aren't any tracks around any of these carcasses".

16 June 1992 – cow found in Comanche County, with eyeballs, heart and anus removed. A calf had been pulled from the cow's stomach and cut up.

29 August 1992 – cow found north of Tipton, with heart, tongue and udder removed, apparently with a scalpel.

TEXAS

Sept 1991 – six cats found dissected with a sharp instrument in Plano, in one instance the internal organs removed. In addition, 30-35 cats were reported missing since July.

Nov 1991 – remains of at least 800 animals – mostly young goats and sheep, but including chickens and turkeys – discovered at three sites between Weatherford and Azle, Parker County. A deer was missing heart and sexual organs; its stomach had been removed and "set up on a hill with several deer legs around it". Also found were several beer cans and a paint bucket containing less than a pint of blood. Some carcasses were fresh, others over a year old.

WASHINGTON STATE

26 June 1990 – body of a year-old steer found in Clark County with genitals removed. At least seven cattle mutilations reported in Clark County between May and December 1990. Skin samples were studied by Denver pathologist John Altshauler, who concluded that the skin was cut using high temperatures, suggesting lasers, because of the way the cells were intact.

OTHER STATES

There were also mutilations reported in Idaho (four in Mar-July 1990), Kentucky (unspecified number in April 1991) and Missouri (11 in Spring 1992).

Avoid unwanted and tragic Cattle Mutilations in your family!
WATCH FOR THESE WARNING SIGNS:
1) NO FOOTPRINTS, 2) U.F.O. SIGHTINGS,
3) SURGICAL INCISIONS, 4) NO BLOOD,
5) MISSING ORGANS, 6) RADIATION...
BEWARE! THIS MYSTERIOUS MENACE CAN STRIKE AT ANY TIME!

Illustration: Jay Kinney

CANADA

Feb 1991 – six-year-old pregnant cow found north-east of Edmonton, with tongue and foetus cut out, one eye pulled from socket and cheek peeled back.

1 July 1991 – Charolais-cross cow found in a pasture south of Saskatoon, with udder and anus removed. A patch of worn-down grass suggested that the animal had lived for some time after the mutilation. A vet suggested the animal had died of a metabolic condition called hypomagnisemia brought on by the wet weather, and the organ theft performed by magpies and crows.

July 1992 – seven heifers killed south of Edmonton since the previous September, six had sexual organs removed, and 'often' their blood had been drained. Frightened beef farmer Doris Verchomin blamed 'dumb Druids'.

MEXICO

May – August 1990 – 50 to 100 horses found hanging from trees around San Luis San Pedro, north of Acapulco. Many showed signs of ritualist mutilation, with puncture marks and deep incisions along the throat through which the animals' blood was drained. Town commissioner Gaston Estrada said that a note had been found at one mutilation site, signed by the 'Green Scorpions', proclaiming a pact with the devil to kill 150 horses.

Others suspected 'drug addicts from the mountains'. The town lies in the shadow of the Sierra Madre de Guerrero, for 20 years Mexico's most fertile marijuana-growing region. When the army and federal police arrived in July to curb the drug harvest, the horse killings declined, but kidnappings started.

HEAD TO HEAD

THEM & US

"I may be paranoid, but am I paranoid enough?"
SIMON WHITTAKER talks to MARY SEAL, conspiracy researcher

Mary Seal, a former public relations officer aged 48, shot to media prominence by organising the First International Conference That Exposes A Global Deception, held at Wembley over the weekend of 9-10 January. The hall was paid for by Mary and her partner Keith Mears and guest speakers were flown in from America and Europe.

Although there are many researchers delving into the mad, the bad and the dangerous to know, Mary Seal is a rarity in attempting to weave the many different strands together into a consistent and apocalyptic world-view, one too rich for English publishers to stomach, judging by the reception of the manuscript outlining her theories. FT spoke to Mary in her suburban home on the outskirts of Birmingham.

FT Who are you and where are you from?
MS: I'm just a normal person who started researching a long time ago. What set me off was a UFO sighting when I was about 18 or 19. It was so clear during daytime and there was no doubt that it was a physical object – nothing hazy or paranormal about it.

FT: Was it in this country?
MS: Yes, in Aldridge, near Walsall. I was sitting in a car, not thinking about anything and I looked up to see this huge Mothership type affair; and I thought: "My God, I'm going to get someone else to look at this with me." I was about to get out of the car and I realised I'd been *made* to look up. Out of it came three discs, much darker than the coppery-coloured Mothership. They got up to a certain height then shot off. I'd never considered UFOs before, but after that I started thinking things weren't as they appeared and began reading into a variety of fields.

FT: Just to get a grasp on your world-view, what do you think UFOs are?
MS: Well, they're man-made machines, undoubtedly. Advanced technology kept secret by Government. They pretend free energy is a Utopian dream because it wouldn't do for people to stop using petrol. I would have thought that was obvious to anyone. Go to America and talk to top scientists and they'll tell you quite openly what can be done. Getting them to come over and say it on a stage is a different matter. It can be proved the Nazis had this technology. In the Public Records Office there's quite a few documents that have been sealed for years, newspaper clippings and scientific reports. Nazi anti-gravity is one of the best-kept secrets of the last war.

FT: How did this lead to your conference?
MS: I had so much information and stuff on UFOs, but most of it came

from America. I put a book together, but couldn't get it published. Finally I thought the only way to get this information out – and I had to do it – was to put on this conference in London. The public must be able to hear this information.

FT: Were your speakers chosen to fit in with your world view?
MS: I was trying to get a global picture – there are people who know the political conspiracies, they know officially-sanctioned drug trafficking goes on – they may not understand why. They know the United Nations is moving in a particular manner – they think they're separate issues. People in this country haven't got a clue, but in America there *is* discussion. Here, people think of UFOs as little lights in the sky. They're not aware of the technology certain governments have got. They're not aware of what is going on, it's quite incredible. Of course, trying to get my speakers to present the whole picture was difficult... each one goes off at pet tangents and we did have some problems.

FT: Did you have personality clashes?
MS: No, but two failed to turn up – they'd been threatened and one had 'personal problems'. Another speaker, Vladimir Terziski, I'd engaged purely as a physicist to explain anti-gravity; instead of which he started talking of different races. He ruined it for me. I personally don't subscribe to that stuff. I'm sure there's no ET element doing all the cattle mutilations and abduction. Neither do I think there are grey beings from out of this world. I think they're clones. One of the things that Terziski said was that Nazi UFOs were at the South Pole. I'm sure that's disinformation. I think the Allies came across all this incredible technology and promptly absorbed it. I'm sure the Vatican, who were very much 'in' with the Nazis, were involved in the scientific work. But I think *now* there is something going on at the South Pole – a study to train people to work in extreme conditions, but no legacy of the Nazis.

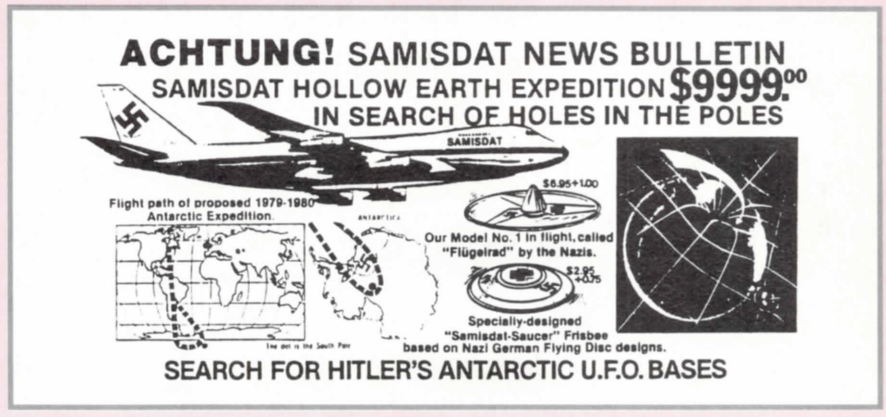
FT:You said two of your would-be speakers were threatened?
MS: Yeah, one of them [Norio Hayakawa] working for Nippon TV at the Nevada desert test site had hours and hours of footage clearly showing anti-gravity 'UFO' manoeuvres – there's no doubt what they are. I've seen them. A week before the conference, we had a fax from him saying he'd been advised by some of the intelligence community he'd been in touch with, that the Ministry of Defence had sent a notice over saying he'd be arrested for espionage if he entered this country with this information and it'd be sequestered. I asked the MOD to see this official document and they said we couldn't until two months after the conference. The other speaker [Jordan Maxwell] had some mysterious men in a BMW draw up and they threatened him...

FT: Not 'Men In Black'?
MS: [laughs] No, I don't think so – these were real ones... and that was that.

FT: Who were the speakers you did get?
MS: Well, the first was Dr Robert Strecker – a Los Angeles doctor who's been looking into the AIDS question for years and has arrived at the theory that it's a genetically-engineered disease straight out of Fort Detrick and deliberately introduced into the African countries through the smallpox vaccinations. Eustace Mullins – he's written about 35 books on the Federal Reserve systems, the banking cover-up, the legal cover-up. He's been branded anti-semitic, but he's not. People haven't understood what he's been talking about – it's true that he's affiliated to some extreme right-wing Christian groups, but he himself remains objective.

Then there was Vladimir Terziski. There was an Australian journalist, David Summers, who's written a lot about the Trilateral Commission, the Bilderburgs [two of the supposed one-world-government think-tank groups touting hidden agendas] and, of course, William Cooper [a former US Naval Intelligence operative and UFO investigator].

FT: There's said to be a lot of intelligence disinformation passed out through UFO groups and indeed Bill Cooper has owned up to that. Aren't you afraid your conference could be a mouthpiece for this?
Ms: Oh, I'm well aware of this. What I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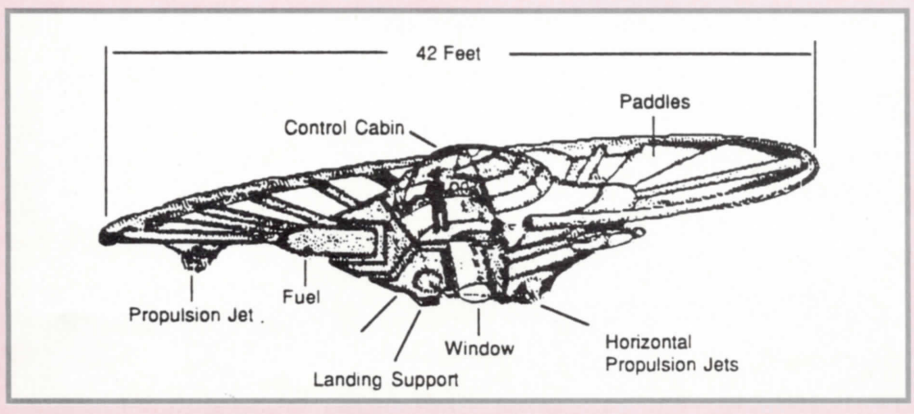


ABOVE: Many hollow-earth believers have long suspected that after World War II the Nazis withdrew to underground bases in Antarctica where they started a flying saucer assembley line. This advertisement is by Christof Friedrich (pseudonym of Ernst Zündel), author of *UFOs: Nazi Secret Weapon?*

LEFT: One of the German flying saucer designs published in the English language version of *Der Spiegel* in 1950.

admire about Bill Cooper is that where he's been fed disinformation he's owned up to it while a lot of UFO groups carry on spouting the same things they said in 1989 and it's all coming out of the government. People suspect us of being agents of the government or Nazis. They couldn't see why we did this conference. When we went to the States to vet people for the conference we met an awful lot of them who said things they weren't prepared to repeat on stage so there's no doubt in my mind of the genuine information – you can sift it out if you're careful. I had to pursue Cooper very hard to make him come to Britain, but that just makes me think he's not got anything to sell. The amount of disinformation They're putting on him is incredible. I think he must be one of the most targeted individuals in the world.

Financially, the conference was a disaster, but in terms of awareness it's gone all over the world. We'd like to do another, but we'd need funding. It's something we're actively pursuing. We've had offers, but as soon as you accept someone's financial offer you have to do their bidding. It's obvious to me who *They* are and what *They* want. Certain groups that say they're working for the betterment of mankind or on certain questions, you later find are being manipulated by those running the show…

FT: It's said that if you sign a petition in this country against the government, someone in intelligence will enter your name in their records. Do you worry you're targeted?

MS: I already am. I'm absolutely sure of it. I've been told I am by more than one party – but if you get out in the open, *They're* hardly likely to do anything to you. I don't know why people get so worried. The more exposed you are, the safer you are. I know my phone's tapped because I've had certain conversations repeated by a third party. He's working for certain people in UK intelligence who're not *for* what's gone down. He didn't approach me – in fact I'm very sceptical of people who come looking for me. There are also certain UK politicians who're very worried and would like to put a stop to it.

FT: Who is this *Them*, the Secret Government?

MS: It's just made up of people who've been machinating

TOP: Bill Clinton, a Rhodes Scholar, alleged 33 degree Mason and current American president.

ABOVE: Bobby Fischer, the paranoid chess Grand Master, who had all his dental fillings removed to stop Russian radio transmissions into his head.

RIGHT: Conference organiser Mary Seal receiving a proof of her Wembley brochure.

A rare photograph of William Cooper, a UFO buff formerly with US Naval Intelligence, who spoke at the Wembley conference.

for years to control the world through resources and manpower and of course they have infiltrated key positions – government, media, intelligence communities – and are pulling the strings. I don't think governments themselves are guilty. *They're* being manipulated through aid money – it's the only way to manipulate governments. They have to go to war, are lent money and then told what to do.

FT: To conspiracy theorists there's always a *They*. You've said 'How'. But who is it – the Trilateral Commission? The CFR? The Illuminati? Who's at the top of the pyramid?

MS: The Illuminati, definitely. I think this is a plot going back thousands of years. I believe they've known about free energy for ever, but only now can they put it into place – since the development of quantum physics this century. I believe there's much more to Tesla's inventions than *They* say and maybe he was actually working for *Them*. I think Einstein was a stooge. Of course, we're all made to think it's ridiculous. I think *They*'re aware the Earth has an energy grid system, anti-gravity. The same people who control the oil companies are behind government, behind what's taking place. *They*'re all in key positions now. Clinton was a 33 degree Mason, a Cecil Rhodes scholar linked to Carol Quigley, a Trilateral Commissioner. People say there's no proof, but it's easy to follow the trail – it's provable. Ultimately what you're talking about through the Masons, the Illuminati, is the continuation of the Holy Roman Empire against someone else with a power struggle going on at the very top. Who knows?

FT: So what of Bush's New World Order, the invasions of Somalia, Bosnia, etc?

MS: The world's being policed by the UN. I think it may have started as well-intentioned, but look at the League of Nations and who was behind that... Civil aviation pilots say UN tanks are all over America, positioned, thousands and thousands in desert places. I think the LA riots were an experiment. I think that's how *They*'ll create a state of emergency with a long-range goal of taking over the world. But, and this is just personal speculation, I think *They* know *something's* going to take place – geological or whatever. From the information I've been able to gather, I think we're coming to another Ice Age. *They* know and are making plans for evacuation off this planet. *They've* colonised the moon, *They* have bases up there and on Mars. NASA has a secret space programme...

FT: Since you're reaching a *Fortean Times* audience who may be more aware of the issues you're talking of, what other areas of concern have you?

MS: I think we should be aware of the incredible mind-control and brainwashing the security agencies have been developing. Everyone thinks of MKULTRA as being the last major exercise – it's not.

FT: Yeah, even the paranoid chess-player Bobby Fischer had all his fillings removed for his comeback to stop Russian radio transmissions into his head.

MS: He's not so paranoid because all the work that's gone into microwave technology, ELF technology, is provable. It's proven that certain low-frequency waves can affect your immune system. I don't think AIDS is just a virus. I think certain areas of the world are being 'zapped'. *They've* got hold of all the mineral resources through debt payments and don't want a 'useless population' – *Their* words.

Brain implants are provable – doctors in Sweden have proved it. *They* can completely manipulate the human mind now – implant pictures, cause behaviour. That's the most atrocious thing – that, and the cloning.

FT: What have you unearthed about cloning?

MS: Rumours about ET labs under the desert in Dulce, New Mexico, are disinformation. Those labs are certainly for genetic engineering carried on from the Nazi period. *They* can, without a shadow of a doubt, make a being. *They've* made about 40,000 and utilised these abduction scenarios. I believe they're used for two purposes: one, to plant the idea of extraterrestrials and two, as a future labour force to work under extreme conditions. This is one thing I am going to pursue until I can get some proof. The Nazi experiments have been taken onto the Illuminati agenda. It's like playing God, isn't it? Trying to create a super-race – the Nazi dream.

FT: So does this scenario explain Men In Black reports?

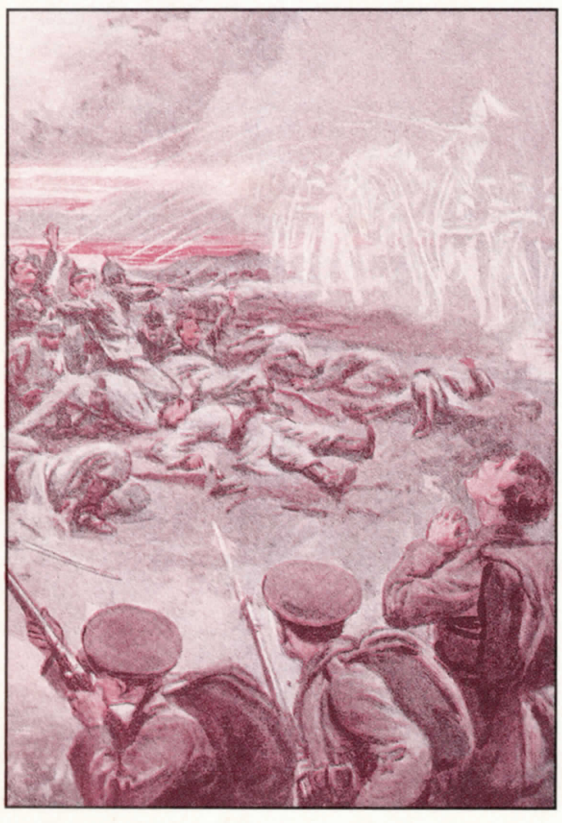
MS: Well, I think... actually, I don't think, I've been told that the whole of the contactee scenario is mind-control. The subjects are genuine. The abductions, some may be hallucinations, some physical events with a genetic angle and some may be just hoaxes to reinforce the ET belief. But you try and tell a contactee it's a hoax...

They obviously have an extremely urgent need for the creation of a New World Order. *They* can't just put it into place. One means could be a declared threat from outer space – you know, "We must unite". I think the SETI programme [Search for Extra Terrestrial Intelligence, using radio telescopes] will be manipulated to come up with threatening signals. Another could be an environmental threat – the ozone layer hole is a complete hoax... **FT**

The interviewer, Simon Whittaker, is writing a book on Conspiracy Theory, historic and current, and welcomes any comments, clippings or source material on the subject. He can be contacted c/o 2 Hillside, Station Road, Purton, Swindon, SN5 9AL. A 2-video set of selected conference highlights plus other information is available from 60 Fallowfield, Orchard Hills, Walsall, W Midlands, WS5 3DH for £25 (incl p&p). Cheques payable to Nightlink Communications.

At the outset of World War One, the British Expeditionary Force was pinned down near the French/Belgian border town of Mons, whereupon something quite inexplicable is reported to have taken place. Kevin McClure re-investigates contradictory rumours of divine intervention...

ANGELS TO THE RESCUE



Debunking is a pretty merciless process. It is seldom that, once debunked, an account of a supposedly paranormal event will ever again achieve credibility.

In the vast majority of cases, this is no loss. I have helped dispatch a number of claims of the extraordinary, and I'm happy to have done so. Much of what is claimed and reported has no substance at all, and we can well do without it.

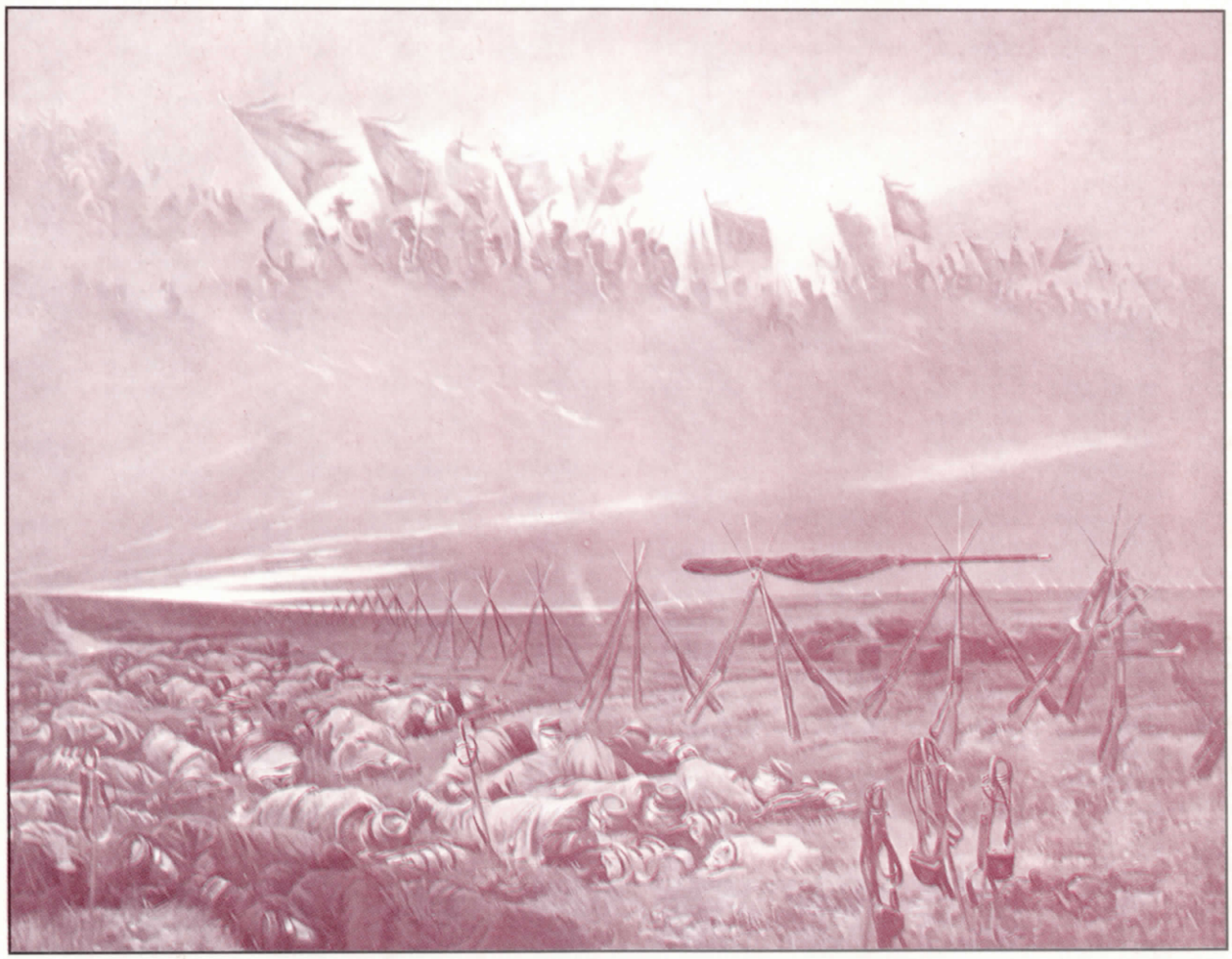
Occasionally though, something of value and significance risks being trampled in the rush to purge what seems unacceptable. This can occur where a rational explanation easily deals with a number of the elements of a complex investigation, but not necessarily with *all* the elements. The reports arising from alleged events during the retreat of the British Expeditionary Force from Mons in 1914 constitute just such a complex and confusing case. Resoundingly debunked since the summer of 1915 onwards, it is time to reconsider these reports. I think that an injustice has been done, though the details of that injustice remain difficult to define.

The Mons legends have always fascinated me. They bring together several of my own areas of interest: the Great War, religious visions, divine intervention, folklore, the writer Arthur Machen and the role the paranormal plays in the lives of people – and nations – under great stress. I've been gathering material on the subject for more than 10 years, but have only recently had the opportunity to bring it all together.

Many will be aware of reports that Saint George and the Agincourt bowmen – or maybe some angels, or possibly both – came between the British and German forces, halting the German advance long enough for an organised withdrawal and regrouping to take place. Many, too, will have read that the reports were all a myth, arising entirely from the retelling – Chinese Whispers style – of a short

story by Arthur Machen entitled 'The Bowmen', first published in the *London Evening Standard* on 29 September 1914. It's an explanation Machen himself originated in the summer of 1915. It was probably misleading then, and has been ever since.

If anything wonderful happened, then it happened in the last days of August 1914, as superior German forces pushed a tired, but heroic, BEF back through France from the Belgian border. I must stress that no contemporary history of the war mentions any visionary event of any kind, the earliest account from a *named* military source being published in 1931, though apparently taken from letters written at the time. Certainly, when Machen's exquisite little story of a beleaguered British soldier invoking Saint George, and the saint arriving with a host of bowmen to drive back the Germans, first appeared in print, the public had read nothing of any claim of divine intervention. Few, though, doubted that we had 'God on our Side'.



LEFT: St George and the spectral bowmen defending WWI British soldiers as depicted by Alfred Pearse. The belief in apparitions of celestial armies is ancient and widespread. Sometimes they are echoes of past battles, but during a war, they are taken as a sign of divine protection, as in Edouard Detaille's painting, ABOVE, of troops sleeping safely at the Front.

"They therefore turned round and faced the enemy, expecting nothing but instant death, when to their wonder they saw, between them and the enemy a whole troop of angels."

When 'The Bowmen' was first published, the two leading paranormal journals of the time, *Light* and *The Occult Review*, both reported on its content and both enquired of Machen whether there was any truth in the tale. He replied that there was not, and both reported back to their readership accordingly. By the end of October 1914, it seemed that the matter had been forgotten.

One of the intriguing mysteries of the Mons legends is what happened next. After a full six months without tales of bowmen, or anything else, an account appeared in *Light* for 24 April 1915 under the title 'The Invisible Allies: Strange Story from the Front'. This refers back to Machen's story and continues in part:

"A few days ago, we received a visit from a military officer, who asked to see the issue of *Light* containing the article in question. He explained that, whether Mr Machen's story was pure invention or not, it was certainly stated in some quarters that a curious phenomenon had been witnessed by several officers and men in connection with the retreat from Mons. It took the form of a strange cloud interposed between the Germans and the British. Other wonders were heard or seen in connection with this cloud which, it seems, had the effect of protecting the British against the overwhelming hordes of the enemy."

Early in May, a fuller version of a similar account turned up in the All Saints, Clifton, *Parish Magazine*. This was quoted in papers and magazines all over the country,

attracting attention from the national press and also from senior churchmen wanting to present patriotic material in their sermons. It seems that the editor of the *Parish Magazine* had met the daughter of one Canon Marrable, who relayed to him what she had been told by "...two officers, both of whom had themselves seen the angels who saved our left wing from the Germans when they came right upon them during the retreat from Mons.
They expected annihilation, as they were almost helpless, when to their amazement they stood like dazed men, never so much as touched their guns: nor stirred till we had turned round and escaped by some crossroads. One of Miss Marrable's friends, who was not a religious man, told her that he saw a troop of angels between us and the enemy. He has been a changed man ever since. The other man she met in London. She asked him if he had heard the wonderful stories of angels. He said he had seen them himself, and under the following circumstances:-

"While he and his company were retreating, they heard the German cavalry tearing after them. They saw a place where they thought a stand might be made, with sure hope of safety; but before they could reach it, the German cavalry were upon them. They therefore turned round and faced the enemy, expecting nothing but instant death, when to their wonder they saw, between them and the enemy, a whole troop of angels. The German horses turned round terrified and regularly stampeded. The men tugged at their bridles, while the poor beasts tore away in every direction from our men."

In the meantime, stories featuring bowmen were also appearing, the first in, of all places, the Roman Catholic paper *The Universe* for 30 April 1915:

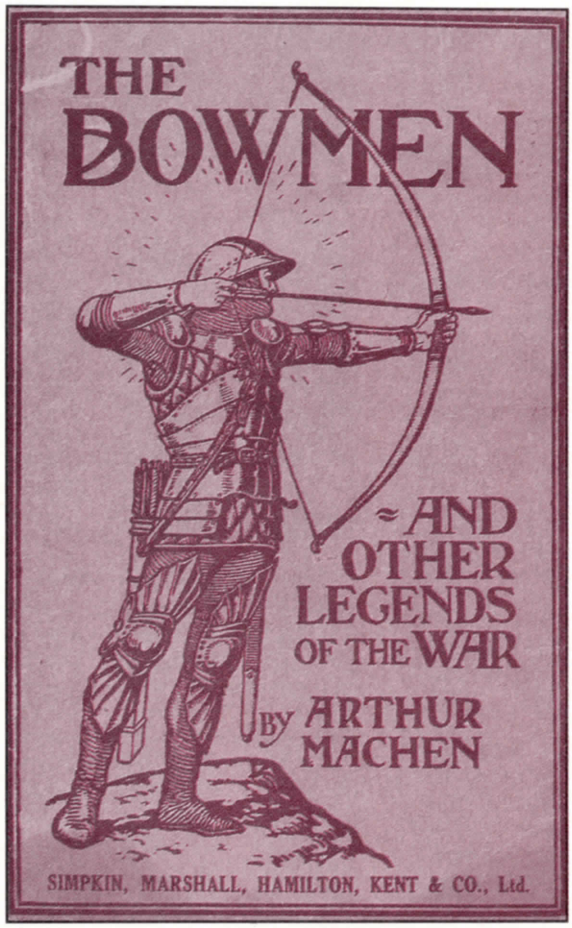
"The story is told by a Catholic officer in a letter from the front, and is told with a simplicity which shows the narrator's own conviction of its genuineness . . .

"A party of about thirty men was cut off in a trench, when the officer said to his men, 'Look here, we must either stay here and be caught like rats in a trap, or make a sortie against the enemy. We haven't much of a chance, but personally I don't want to be caught here.' The men all agreed with him, and with a yell of 'St George for England!' they dashed out into the open. The officer tells how, as they ran on, he became aware of a large company of men with bows and arrows going along with them, and even leading them on against the enemy's trenches, and afterwards when he was talking to a German prisoner, the man asked him who was the officer on a great white horse who led them, for although he was such a conspicuous figure, they had none of them been able to hit him. I must also add that the German dead appeared to have no wounds on them. The officer who told the story (adds the writer of the letter) was a friend of ours. He did not see St George on the white horse, but he saw the archers with his own eyes."

"It was stated in some quarters that a curious phenomenon had been witnessed by several officers and men in connection with the retreat from Mons. It took the form of a strange cloud interposed between the Germans and the British."

And so it went on through the summer and autumn on 1915. Many accounts were published, though some were deliberately fraudulent, and at no time was an account by any named individual proved true. Arthur Machen wrote some more delightful stories along the lines of 'The Bowmen', with a long introduction explaining that all the accounts derived from his own story, and the resulting book sold remarkable well. Other writers backed the reali-

After the famous 'Mons' incident passed into legend, similar experiences were openly reported. This painting by A.C. Michael, c.1916, illustrates the white crucifix seen by British troops around midnight, described by a sergeant in a letter home.



The legend quickly passed into popular belief. ABOVE: The cover of Arthur Machen's collection of short stories in which the 'The Bowmen' first appeared c.1915. BELOW: A music sheet cover c.1915

ty of some or all of the legends and one, 'The Showmen', even parodies the whole affair. Phyllis Campbell, apparently a front-line nurse, mixed some of the legends in with the 'atrocity mythos' that prevailed at the time, recounting the acts of the ghastly Hun in gut-wrenching detail, but providing no evidence for either the paranormal or the psychopathic. The Mons Legends achieved wide publicity and great popularity.

It has not been easy to unravel the huge amount of material published on this subject. There are all sorts of additions and variations in the accounts from 1915, and some intriguing detail in those reported years later. Many sensible comments were made at the time about the effects of extreme fatigue on perception, and the Inquiry conducted by the Society for Psychical Research – a model of its kind – found great difficulty in locating alleged witnesses and in verifying what they were reported to have said. Yet in spite of all these problems, I have come to one firm conclusion, one put tentatively at the time by both the SPR and by the editor of the All Saint's, Clifton, *Parish Magazine*, who received a great many letters giving various versions of the legends.

There were two *separate* stories of divine intervention during the retreat from Mons, one of which – the 'angels' vision – I think probably originated before the publication of 'The Bowmen', and almost certainly within the BEF itself. Such evidence as there is suggests that it was current during, or days after, the retreat.

One certainly derives from 'The Bowmen', with archers and St George featuring consistently. In the 'bowmen' version, the soldiers, under extreme pressure, decide to 'take a chance'. There is someone present who remembers a form of invocation (in the original story, the words 'Adsit Anglis Sanctus Georgius' had been printed on the plates in a vegetarian restaurant). The invocation works, the warriors and their leader appear, a battle cry is heard and the German troops are actually killed, albeit in some mysterious way.

The 'angels' version is substantially different, and I think it significant that the earliest published account – and some later – speak of a 'strange cloud' rather than of defined figures. Though the British soldiers are in a similarly difficult situation, the 'angels' come unbidden, without invocation, and they interpose themselves between the British and German forces. They have no leader and no weapons. There is no battle cry. If the Germans are harmed, it is incidentally, not directly – by their horses bolting or their haste to retreat. The 'angels' kill no one: their role is entirely passive. Neither the events nor their effects bear any resemblance to Machen's work of fiction.

In my booklet *Visions of Bowmen and Angels*, I have gathered together further key contemporary sources for both the Mons Legends and for other reports of extraordinary events during the war; particularly of the remarkable healing figure, the 'Comrade in White'. I hope that I will receive further reports and accounts of which I am unaware, and I will compile a revised version in due course if sufficient new material emerges. For now, I am happy to have rescued a genuine mystery from a premature burial. It makes a refreshing change from debunking!

FT

Visions of Bowmen and Angels is available from the author, price £2 in the UK, £2.50 in Europe, $5 or equivalent (cash preferred) anywhere else in the world (p+p free). Make cheques payable to Kevin McClure and send to: 42 Victoria Rd, Mount Charles, St Austell, Cornwall FL25 4QD, UK.

Russian Flying Man Exposed!

Frightening Creature Scares Family Out of Their Wits

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This happened more than once, and on the tenth day, the head of the family discovered a strange creature resembling a dog, or a huge mouse, under the bed.

After slippers were thrown at the creature, it twitched and grew in size, becoming three times as big. It unexpectedly cast out a very long trunk from its nose which it used to try to grab the legs of the family.

Already scared out of their wits, the family began hitting the creature with whatever they could lay their hands on and the children sprayed it with household chemicals.

The creature rolled over to a far away corner, and lay there not moving. When it was brought out from under the bed, they discovered a creature that looked like a dog. It had very short bluish hair, two three-fingered paws and strong wings, about a meter and a half in wingspread.

The shape of the creature's wings reminded the family of a bat's wing. The creature's muzzle looked like a human face cast in plaster: an almost flat, clear face with a small forehead, very large eyes, and a tiny lipless mouth. Instead of a nose, the creature had one triangular hole.

Mr. Ivanitzky, fearful of the consequences (had he killed a State-protected animal?), threw it out into a ditch. Soon the creature disappeared from that ditch...

Read the November issue of **FATE** magazine, which uncovers firsthand information of the Russian Flying Man and other creatures of our strange world.

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Some say there are things we were never meant to know. Mysteries better left unanswered. Strange places that should never be discovered...

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The Mystery of Green Briar Swamp

There is an age-old legend about haunted buried treasure in the Maryland Green Briar Swamp. Popular belief has it that treasure was hidden in a burial vault by a plantation owner, assisted by a female servant. After burying the treasure, the man supposedly cut off her head with his sword and buried her too.

Known as Big Liz, the slave's apparition has been seen in modern times and is one of the most popular of the Eastern Shore's apparitions.

For at least 30 years local teenagers have believed that if you drive to DeCourcey Bridge, honk your horn six times and blink your headlights three times, Big Liz will be summoned.

She shuffles silently, slowly approaching with stooped shoulders and carrying her head in her hand. While accounts vary, most percipients describe her glowing eyes like "two branding irons fired to a white heat." (Reprinted from **FATE** magazine, August 1992.)

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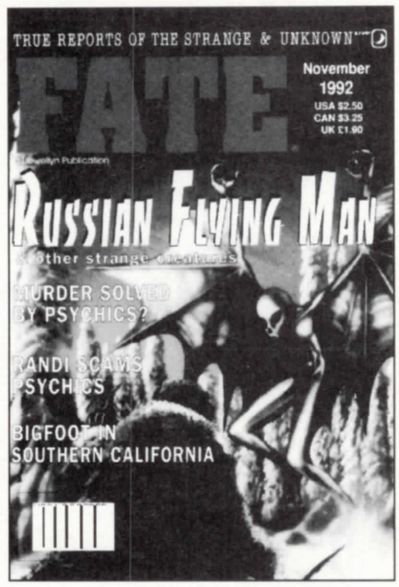

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True Reports of the Strange and Unknown **FATE MAGAZINE**

The Vampire of Croglin Grange

C M DRAPKIN SINKS HIS TEETH INTO A FAMOUS CASE OF BLOOD-SUCKING IN CUMBRIA THAT PRE-DATES DRACULA BY MORE THAN 20 YEARS

'How graves give up their dead, And how the night air hideous grows with shrieks!' Illustration for chapter I of Varney the Vampire, the forgotten vampire story that pre-dates Dracula, showing the protagonist assaulting an innocent maiden.

We all know that vampires do not exist. They are just an old folk-myth, exploited by Bram Stoker and others for the future benefit of film-stars, producers and special-effects men. Or are they? The Vampire Research Center (VRC) of New York does not think so. It claims to have documentary evidence of 810 vampires around the world. Their most favoured area is not Transylvania, but California. In Britain, they say, there are between 20 and 30.

There is no suggestion, either by the VRC or by ***Fortean Times***, which has featured a number of contemporary reports of vampirism worldwide, that these cases are in any way supernatural. Dr Stephen Kaplan, director of VRC and "the world's leading authority on vampires", says they are "mainly nice people" who drink only a few ounces of blood at a time, presumably not directly from source, avoid strong sunlight, and occasionally sleep in coffins. [1] There's no accounting for taste.

"But do Dracula-types exist, with insatiable blood-lust, propagating by turning the corpses of their victims into vampires, immortal unless killed by one of the prescribed methods?"

But, do Dracula-types exist, with insatiable blood-lust, propagating by turning the corpses of their victims into vampires, immortal unless killed by one of the prescribed methods? Captain Edward Rowe Fisher of Thorncombe, near Guildford, evidently thought so. A retired army officer, active throughout the Crimean War as a cornet, later a lieutenant, in the 4th Dragoons, he sounds like an impeccable witness. [2] One of those to whom he told his story was Augustus Hare, in June 1874, 23 years before Stoker's *Dracula* was published. Hare recorded it in his diary and later published it in his autobiography. [3]

Thomas Fisher – Edward's father – migrated from Cumberland in about the middle of the last century. Their home – Croglin Grange – was some centuries old. By a curious tradition it had never been more than one storey high. The village of Croglin still exists; you can find it on the B6413, about 20 miles southeast of Carlisle. The Grange was let to a family of two brothers and a sister, who settled down happily in their new home.

One night, after they had all retired to bed, the sister lay, enjoying, through her window, the view of the moonlit countryside and the little church nearby. Presently, she noticed

A scene from the new cinematic celebration of the mythology of the undead, *Dracula* (Columbia TriStar, 1993) by Francis Ford Coppola. Below: Augustus J C Hare (1834-1903). Gullible enough to fall for Fisher's tall story?

two lights flickering in the trees between the house and the churchyard. To her horror, she realised that they were the eyes of a monstrous figure, gliding inexorably closer, stopping outside her window.

Her bedroom door was next to the window; to escape she would have to go towards *the thing*. She cowered in her bed, too terrified even to scream, as the red eyes glared from a brown, withered face. The creature scratched on the glass, and she heard a pecking noise as it picked at the lead holding a diamond-shaped pane of glass. As the section fell out, a bony hand reached in and turned the catch; it entered the room, seized her by the hair and bit her throat. Finally finding her voice, she screamed. Her brothers rushed in to find her bleeding and unconscious. The intruder fled from the room, climbed over the garden wall and disappeared into the churchyard.

The young lady evidently did not have a morbid imagination; when she recovered, she suggested that her attacker was probably an escaped lunatic rather than a supernatural creature. However, her doctor insisted that her brothers take her abroad to get over the shock.

The following year, they returned to the Grange. This time, the brothers slept in the room next to hers, with loaded pistols by their beds. One night in March, she was awakened by the familiar scratching at her window, to see the same wizened face peering in at her. At her scream, the brothers rushed out into the garden to confront the creature. One fired his pistol and hit *the thing* in the leg. It limped away, scrambled over the wall and slipped into the vault of a long-extinct family.

The next morning, the brothers, with their servants and neighbours, broke open the vault. Inside, they found the coffins burst open, their contents hideously mangled and strewn over the floor. Only one remained intact. When they opened it, inside lay the brown, shrivelled creature that had twice attacked their sister, with a fresh bullet-wound in its leg. They burned the body, and nothing more was ever heard of the ghoulish assailant of Croglin Grange.

> "To her horror, she realised that they were the eyes of a monstrous figure, gliding inexorably closer, stopping outside her window."

This story has fascinated students of the occult. Anthony Masters simply repeats Fisher's account, as set down by Hare, without comment. [4] Peter Haining credits the story on the grounds that it was told some time before the publication of *Dracula*. [5]

The principal champion of the Croglin Grange vampire was the learned occultist Montague Summers [6], who overcame several important objections to the story. There is no record of a Croglin Grange in the vicinity of Croglin, so Summers suggested that a house, known as Croglin Low Hall, sufficiently answered the description. It is possible that Hare might have recorded the name wrongly. Furthermore, the local churchyard does not contain a family vault, nor is there a record of one. No doubt, Summers argues, the local people destroyed it along with the vampire, having no wish to publicise the story.

So, what are we to make of this rather ineffective vampire? Not a lot. The identification of Croglin Grange with Croglin Low Hall is a triumph of faith over reason. The Grange was evidently a gentleman's residence, located near the church. Croglin Low Hall was a farmhouse, situated a mile from the churchyard. A sketch of it by Charles G. Harper clearly shows it as being two storeys high. Harper himself discounted the vampire story. [7]

The Fisher family did indeed come from Cumberland. The first mention of them is of a "Joseph Fisher of Scarrowhill, parish of Cumwhitton, later of Ruckcroft, parish of Ainstable". [8] Both places are within a few miles of Croglin. (Captain Fisher never actually said that Croglin

Grange was in Croglin, but it is a reasonable assumption to make.) Early directories of Cumberland mention Fishers at Coathill and Moorthwaite, Cumwhitton and at Dale, Ainstable. None are mentioned at Croglin, whose name is perfect for anyone inventing a creepy story; it means 'rock (by the) water'.

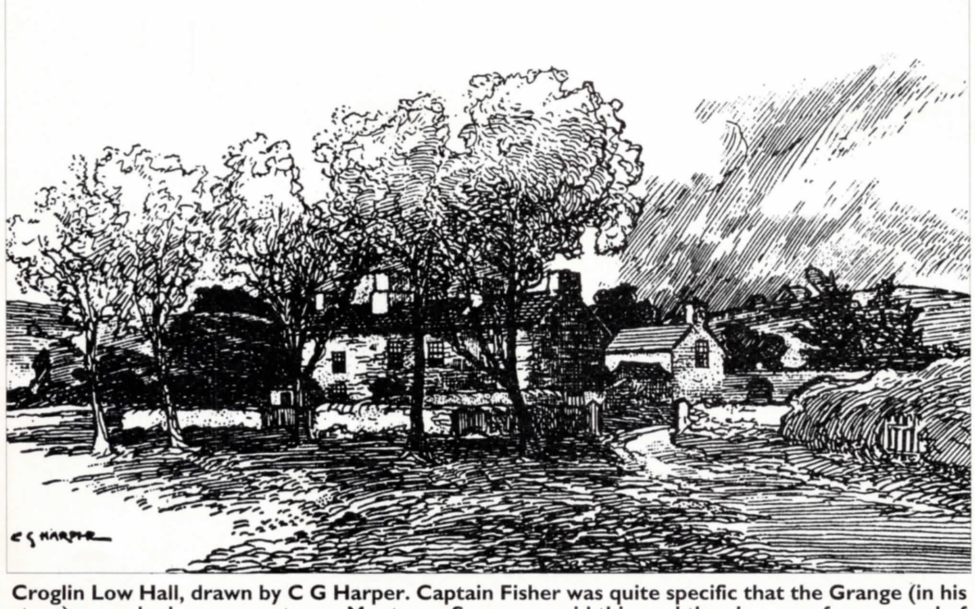
But why should a manifestly honest man like Fisher invent such a story? Presumably, the answer lies in the character of Augustus Hare. This distinguished writer was also a rather comic figure, a humourless snob with an insatiable appetite for scandal and tall stories. (I am bound to say that he sounds rather likeable, nevertheless.) He tells of several supernatural events, including the famous story of Lord Dufferin's escape from a fatal lift-accident thanks to a premonitory dream, which has since been discredited.

Another of his tales is about a supernatural visitation before the death of "Mr (or Colonel) McPherson of Glen Truim". Colonel Lachlan McPherson, who was the first member of the McPherson family to live at Glentruim House, Inverness-shire, outlived Hare by a year. [10] He served in the Crimea as a lieutenant in the 30th Cambridgeshire Regiment, where Lieutenant Fisher may have met or heard of him; for it was Fisher who told Hare this palpably false story. The Captain wasn't a liar; he merely had a sense of humour. Unfortunately, Hare took him seriously.

The fact that his vampire story was told years before *Dracula* is a blood-red herring. There were several fictional vampires before 1874, such as J.S. LeFanu's *Carmilla*, published in 1874; and T.P Prest's lengthy *Varney the Vampire*, in 1847, whose first chapter has the vampire entering his victim's bedroom by unpicking the lead from a diamond-shaped window-pane. Fancy!

FT

The vampire at his awful feast. From *Varney the Vampire* (1847)



Croglin Low Hall, drawn by C G Harper. Captain Fisher was quite specific that the Grange (in his story) never had an upper storey. Montague Summers said this, and the absence of any record of a Croglin Grange, "does not affect the story in the slightest". For him the Low Hall was "exactly Croglin Grange". (*The Vampire in Europe*, p130.)

NOTES

1 - *Sunday Telegraph* 19 August 1992.
2 - *Burke's Landed Gentry*, 'Army List' (1855).
3 - Augustus Hare, *The Story of My Life* (1900); reprinted as *In My Solitary Life* (G. Allen & Unwin, Lonson, 1953).
4 - Anthony Masters, *The Natural History of the Vampire* (Hart-Davis, London, 1972).
5 - Peter Haining, *Vampire* (WH Allen, London, 1985).
6 - Montague Summers, *The Vampire in Europe* (Kegan Paul, London, 1929; reprinted by Aquarian Press, Wellingborough, 1980).
7 - Charles G. Harper, *Haunted Houses* (1907; reprinted by EP Publishing, Whitehaven, 1974).
8 - *Burke's Landed Gentry* (1871).
9 - *Parson & White's Directory of Cumberland, 1829* (Michael Moon, Whitehaven, 1984). *Mannix & Whellan's Directory of Cumberland, 1847* (Michael Moon, 1974).
10 - *Burke's Landed Gentry* (1906).

FOOTNOTE

The prevalence of military men, as both witnesses and victims, in the 18th and 19th century studies of eastern European vampire lore, may be significant. Besides travelling to faraway places, they lent both heroism and authority to the tales. Vampire adventures were, most likely, a familiar form of tall-story among the troops in the Crimea, where the spinner of the Croglin yarn, Captain Edward Fisher, had himself served, surrounded by the very lands - from Greece to Russia (see Summers, note 6, above) - that nurtured the original vampiric folklore. In one of the classic accounts, the teller, like Fisher, is a *cornet* in the cavalry. Fisher might also have been influenced by tales of the mystery beast that terrorized Ennerdale, in his native Cumbria, in 1810, which, according to Fort killed sheep by "biting into the jugular vein and sucking the blood" *(Books* p643). **RJMR**

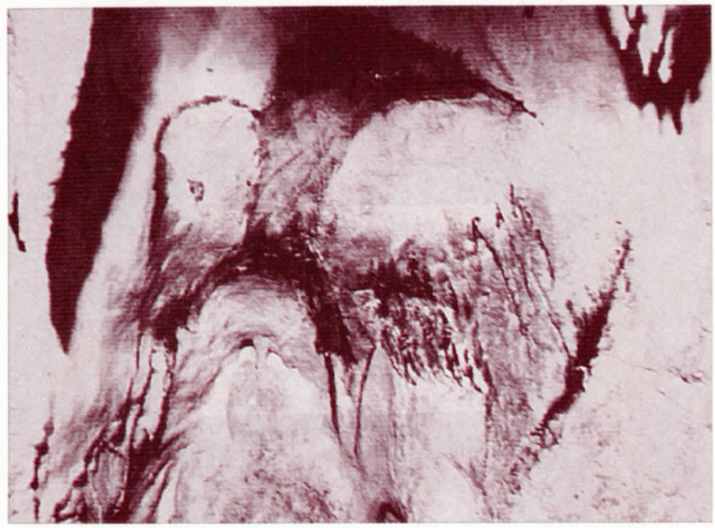
This article first appeared in *The Skeptic* (Sept 1992) and is reproduced with kind permission. [The Skeptic: PO Box 475, Manchester M60 2TH, UK.] C M Drapkin is a writer with an interest in the occult and criminology.

UNEARTHED
Fresco Fiasco

Steve Moore investigates ancient cave art near the Spanish town of Alava

It's been a strange few months in the field of prehistoric cave-art. October 1991 brought the announcement that a new grotto had been discovered at Sormiou near Marseilles, with paintings of bison, horses, hand-prints and so-on. The entrance to the cave was 100 feet under water, and had been discovered a few months earlier by diver Henri Cosquer; the cave itself was 600 feet inland, just above sea-level.

The tunnel-approach was dangerous – on a previous occasion, Cosquer had discovered the bodies of three young skin divers trapped in it – but he later led a party of archæologists under Jean Courtin to the cave, for investigation and photography. After that, the tunnel mouth was sealed with rocks to prevent further deaths; originally it was above sea-level.



The drawing of a mammoth in a Zubialde cave near Alava. The drawings, found some two years ago and according to experts the best saved of its kind, were now uncovered as a forgery. It is supposed that an archæology student, who discovered the drawings, faked them himself.

The animal paintings were judged to be contemporary with those of Lascaux, about 12-14,000 years old; the hand-prints were thought to be 8,000 years older. Samples of charcoal from an ancient hearth in the cave gave a radiocarbon date of about 18,000 BC. So far, so good. By January 1992, though, the possibility was being raised that the paintings might be fakes. The problem is basically style: the Sormiou paintings are very like the Lascaux ones, in a style which has previously only been found in southwestern France and northwestern Spain. Other cave-paintings from the same area as Sormiou tend to be in the more schematic 'Mediterranean' style.

There are other rare features: a bison shown in three-quarter face, the sex of bison and horses shown, and a strange flippered bird-like creature that looks like a cross between a seal and a penguin. With the cave sealed and no further investigation likely until later this year, we have to leave this one in the pending file.

After the Sormiou news, things went downhill fast. The Tarn-et-Garonne cave, in southwestern France, was discovered in 1952. Over the years, a number of visitors made their way along 200 feet of tunnel to see the 15,000-year-old bison paintings the cave contained and, as visitors will, some of them left graffiti behind. So the local cavers, the Albigeois Speleo-Club, decided to have the place cleaned up and brought in 70 members of a Protestant youth group, the Eclaireurs de France. Unfortunately, they didn't tell the authorities; nor, it seems, did they tell the Eclaireurs exactly what to do with their steel brushes. Hey presto...two bison disappeared! Oops. The French Culture Ministry is now suing both groups.

In 1990, Serafin Ruiz Selva, a history student and amateur potholer, discovered paintings in a cave at Zigoitia in the Basque region of northern Spain. There were 20 paintings of animals (rhinoceroses, mammoths, horses and bison), 49 symbols and splashes of colour. 'Experts' from Spanish universities pronounced the paintings to be 13,000 years old and in superb condition.

Moreover, the paintings provided evidence that animals like the rhinoceros were present in Europe much earlier than usually thought, and so European prehistory was going to have to be revised. Ruiz was presented with ten million pesetas (£55,000) and hailed as a hero. The cave became a tourist attraction.

> "There are other rare features: a bison shown in three-quarter face, the sex of bison and horse shown, and a strange flippered bird-like creature that looks like a cross between a seal and a penguin."

Alas, further examination has shown the paintings to be 'near-perfect' forgeries. Although painted in natural pigments containing iron and manganese, it seems that the drawings were made with a modern sponge. The horns have been put in the wrong place on some animals, and the legs of spiders and insects were found embedded in the paint; these would not have been preserved over so many centuries. Also, chemical analysis has shown the paint itself to be no more than 30 months old. As for Serafin Ruiz, reports vary. Some say he's not suspected of the hoax; others that he's being questioned by the authorities; others that he's mysteriously disappeared. In the meantime, paint on walls seems to equal egg on face.

[AP+UPI] 18 Oct 1991; Independent on Sunday, 12 Jan 1992; Newark (NJ) Star-Ledger, 22 Mar 1992; D.Telegraph, D.Mail, Guardian, Independent, 14 Aug 1992.

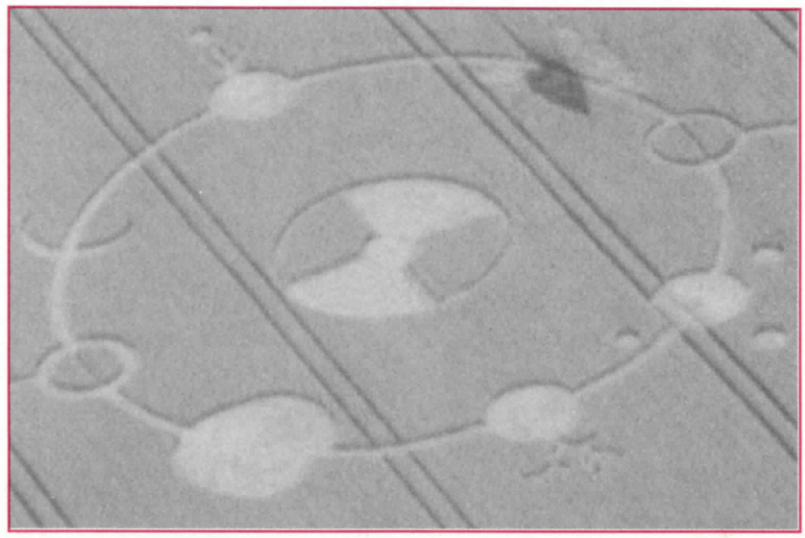
THE CROP THICKENS

John Mitchell, editor of *The Cerealogist*, looks back on the 1992 harvests of crop circles

The crop circles phenomenon is something Forteans have always wanted; a highly visible, totally mysterious excitement, which affects people widely in many different ways, and can be studied in all its aspects over a period of years. To take this opportunity of recording a new Fortean phenomenon, as it develops, is the main purpose of *The Cerealogist* magazine.

Issue 8 of *The Cerealogist* provides a round-up of the 1992 season, including reports of circle formations in Surrey, Sussex, Gloucester, Devon and other counties – including outbreaks in Belgium and Hungary. But the main action, as usual, was in Wiltshire, particularly around Avebury and the famous nearby centre of circle infestation at Alton Barnes.

Alton Barnes is in one of the most beautiful districts of England, and ideal for circle spotting. Its open, rolling fields of wheat and barley are overlooked by green, chalk hills, studded with barrows and antiquities from which watchers can, in theory at least, see everything going on below them. Sadly though, it did not turn out like that. Enthusiasts patrolled the fields or camped out on the hills, peering and pointing cameras through the gloom of Wiltshire nights. There were plenty of reports of strange lights and assorted UFO effects, and many dawns revealed newly-made crop formations, but these appeared as mysteriously as ever, and nothing significant was seen by the watchers.



1992 highlight: the 'Charm Bracelet' near Silbury Hill. It appears in a record of the 1992 season by 'The Phenomenon Collective', available in sets of prints or a 40min video. Contact Grant Wakefield, 0273 747746, for details

Frustration was followed by an epidemic of paranoia. The watchers fell to accusing each other of faking circles under each others' noses. Certain individuals were fingered as closet circle-haters; suspected of knowing everyone's movements and, by posing as genuine researchers, secretly making circles to discredit the whole phenomenon.

It went further. Leading researcher George Wingfield, of the Centre for Crop Circle Studies, saw an international, government plot against the crop circles. He stormed off to the United States and spread the news across the lecture circuit and TV networks.

Meanwhile, at Alton Barnes, Mike Chorost's Anglo-American team of scientists and near-scientists laboured diligently, collecting soil and plant samples from dozens of circle sites and sending them off for analysis. From preliminary reports, it seems that the sensational results claimed after the previous year's analysis (ie. 1991) have not been repeated.

A highlight of the year was *The Cerealogist*'s crop circle making contest, held on the night of 11-12 July in a Buckinghamshire wheatfield. Twelve teams, including some known, skilled circle-fakers, competed for a first prize of £3,000 to reproduce a given pictogram pattern. The results were as you care to see them. Many people said the reproductions were about as good as the real thing. The experts, on the other hand, thought they lacked something. [See **FT64:7**]

The most impressive, beautifully designed and detailed crop circle of the year appeared late in the season, only a few yards from the 'Waggon and Horses' inn at Beckhampton, a traditional resort where crop watchers take their ale on summer evenings. Known as the 'Charm Bracelet', the design was a ring with eight symbols on its circumference, and these symbols included types which had appeared in formations earlier that year. It was like the menu following the dinner.

It is thought that there were not quite so many circles in 1992 as in the year before, and none of the main researchers is prepared to say which, or how many, of them were fakes. Clearly some were, but in other cases the circumstances were so puzzling that neither the hoax theorists nor others could find a good explanation. So the plot thickens, the mystery deepens, and everyone is looking forward to further surprises next season.

The latest and back issues of *The Cerealogist* can be had for £2.50 / $6 each – or £7.50 / $18 for a 3-issue sub – from SKS, 20 Paul St, Frome, Somerset BA11 1DX. (Tel: 0373 451777)

THE OTHER HALF

Bob Rickard discovers that surgically parted Siamese twins feel their separation as a tangible grief

KATIE & EILISH HOLTON

The plight of Catherine and Eilish Holton received considerable exposure through many newspaper articles and a number of documentaries on ITV. The twins were born in Dublin's Coombe Hospital in August 1988, weighing 10lb. Their parents – Liam and Mary, from Donadea in Co.Kildare – introduced their other children – Claire, Therese and Mairead – to their new sisters, and the twins were quickly absorbed into their loving and active family.

The Holton twins were joined from shoulder to hip, with rudimentary arms behind their fused shoulders and a single pair of legs from an enlarged single pelvis. Although they had separate spines and sets of internal organs, these were progressively fused downwards through the body. Their rib cages were fused at their tips, and their hearts shared a protective sac.

They grew up as normally as possible (fighting as well as playing) and shared difficult tasks; to open a bottle, for example, one would hold it while the other unscrewed the cap. Physically Katie and Eilish appeared to be thriving, but doctors advised Liam and Mary that there was an increasing possibility that they could die if not separated. The operation was explained to Eilish and Katie by using specially adapted Cabbage Patch dolls joined with Velcro. "We had to give them the chance, " said Liam. "We felt that when we explained it to them, they wanted to take that chance."

We can only imagine what the family went through at this time. The Holtons agreed, but insisted that the girls should have an equal chance and organs would be shared equally. They obtained expert help from Dr Lewis Spitz, Nuffield Professor of Pædiatric Surgery, who had performed ten separations of Siamese twins, and who, in turn, consulted other similarly-experienced surgeons in the USA and Canada.

When the twins were aged three and a half, Prof Spitz began to gather a 25-strong team at Great Ormond Street Hospital for Sick Children, London. The operation – not a "first" as some reporters called it – began on 1st April 1992, lasting 15 hours and involving seven surgeons and five anæsthetists. "It was a major undertaking," said Prof Spitz. "We started at the top and worked down. Half the hospital was on stand-by."

Sadly, Katie died four days later; her heart failed. It seems that Eilish's body was the stronger, and her organs did about two-thirds of the work of keeping them alive. This weakness would have become more apparent as they got older, jeopardising both their lives.

In the days that followed Katie's death, Eilish showed strong signs of a grief that was tangible as well as emotional. She was still withdrawn long after the sedation had worn off. Liam said: "She would wake up from deep sleep and look towards the side where Katie had been and give a jerk before starting to cry." Eilish is still severely handicapped, and will have to undergo long-term therapy for her curved spine and undeveloped arm. At London's Roehampton Rehabilitation Centre, when she is strong enough, she will be fitted with an artificial leg.

Recovery has been swift and sound because of the family's deep love, openness and

YVONNE & YVETTE McCARTHER

Yvonne and Yvette were both found dead, on 2 Jan 1993, by a visitor who called at their home in Long Beach, California. Aged 43, they were the world's oldest surviving craniopagus twins – joined at the top of their heads and having separate bodies except for a shared circulatory system. Curiously, one could have a cold while the other didn't.

Born on 14 May 1949 (a breach delivery), they survived the prognosis of early death, participating actively in school and church life. Their divorced mother Willia already had five children, so part of their childhood was spent in an institution. Another time, poverty forced them to spend some time travelling with the Clyde Beatty Circus, a freak show.

Fed up with life passing them by, at the age of 38 the twins moved out of the family home in Los Angeles, to Long Beach and studied nursing at Compton College. They were inveterate smokers (protesting vociferously about the campus no-smoking zones) and (if the *Sunday Sport* is to be believed) shared cruel hangovers from occasional boozing excesses. (Sources on file.)

commonsense. In a follow-up documentary – made for Carlton TV's *3D*, shown on 25 Feb 1993 – Eilish is shown crawling around the house, on and off the sofa, happy and smiling. There are pre-separation photographs of the twins all around the house, and whenever Katy is mentioned, Eilish looks up at them. Although no one can take Katie's place, the family say, Eilish has formed a strong friendship with her 5yr-old sister Mairead. Mark Galloway, producer of two earlier documentaries for Yorkshire TV, said: "They are always playing hide and seek together."

"Since she's been home, Eilish has been the life of this house," says Mary. "On a bad day you have a lump in your throat when you see Katie's picture. On a good day, you can be like Eilish and you can talk freely about her." A curious thing has happened; the family are becoming convinced that Eilish has inherited some of Katie's characteristics. "Before the operation," said Liam, "Katie was the bossy, outgoing one and Eilish was the quieter of the two. It's hard to pinpoint exactly what has taken place in Eilish's mind, but she has matured enormously and is more playful."

Liam and Mary Holton say they do not regret the operation; they realise that without it they could have lost *both* their daughters. "When we see the quality of Eilish's life today," says Mary, "I know in my heart Katie would have wanted that too. Now she has a lot of the gigging and playfulness that would have been Katie. We look at Eilish and see them both." (Sources on file.)

Pictured together in June 1992, Hussein and Hassan Saleh look like any pair of 5yr-old lads. They share more than their good looks. They were born joined from shoulder to hip in 1986, genetically identical but with different personalities.

HUSSEIN & HASSAN SALEH

Prof Spitz's previous success was with the Saleh twins, whom he separated in April 1987 – when they were eight months old – in an operation also lasting 15 hours and involving 25 staff. Hussein and Hassan were joined in a similar way to Katy and Eilish, but unlike them shared a lower colon and bowel. "We used to be like this," Hussein told Lois Rogers (London *Evening Standard* 16 June 1992), squashing himself up against his brother. "They just cut us in half," interrupts Hassan, making a slicing gesture down the right of his body.

Hussein and Hassan were born in southern Sudan in 1986. When their father's brother, who was working as a pædiatrician in Riyadh, was sent a photo of them, he petitioned King Fahd of Saudi Arabia, who agreed to pay for their operation at Great Ormond Street, and for their 10-year period of post-operative therapy, including their regularly-replaced artificial legs.

As part of Prof Spitz' preparation for the separation of the Holton Twins, he introduced Hassan and Hussein to the Holton family at a time when they were all at GOSH together. It was the sight of these happy, healthy and handsome boys that helped the Holtons make up their minds about separation.

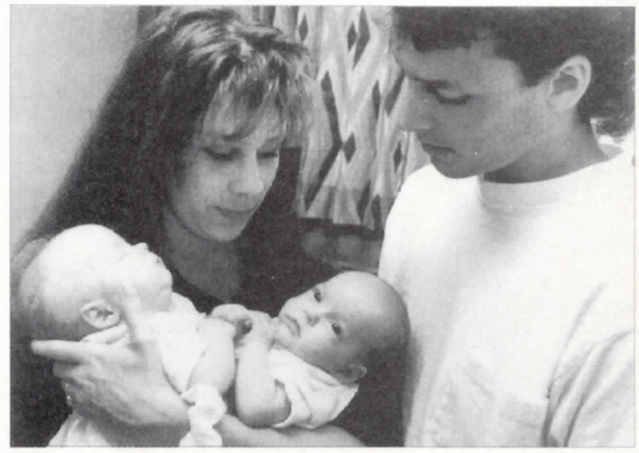
The boys have found it hard to adjust to life apart, and for some time after their separation they were obviously feeling the same kind of grief as Eilish Holton. Prof Spitz said: "They are very, very close. It was only when they were put together in the same bed that their recovery progressed." For years after, they needed to sleep entwined, and even now minutes do not pass without small gestures of affection towards each other. If one is sick, the other can hardly bear to go to school alone. And when one speaks, the other butts in, endorsing his brothers statement as his own. (Other sources on file.)

PAGE & SARA JOHNSON

The Johnson twins were born by Cæsarian section on 12 June 1991. Where the Holton twins were almost side by side, Page and Sara were born directly facing each other like Hassan and Hussein. The area of the join was smaller, from mid-chest to just below the belly button, and several organs were fused together through the opening. Apart from that, their bodies were robust and normal.

Their six-hour separation was carried out on 29 August 1992 at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, under the direction of Dr John Wesley aided by a team of 29 people. They utilised a complex 3D computer imaging system to minimise scarring. Dr Wesley said "We could rotate the images of their bodies and even separate them to work out how much extra skin would be needed to cover the gap."

"The toughest decision was choosing who got the belly button," joked Dr Wesley. "We gave it to Sara because she was smaller and didn't cry so much." Life, for the Johnsons, is now proceeding normally, which, as far as they are concerned, is the miracle they hardly dared hope for.



Page and Sara Johnson with parents Tom and Kimberly of Fargo, North Dakota, just before their separation in 1992.

HORSEWATCH

Madness in the Home Counties

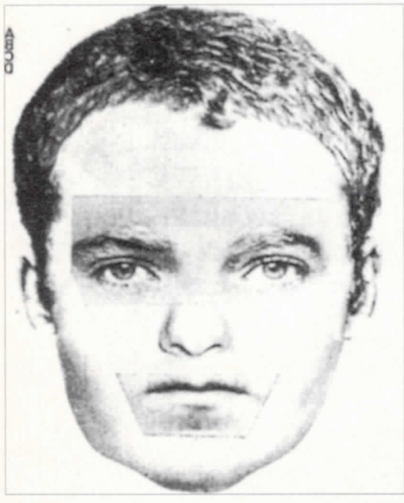
PAUL SIEVEKING CHRONICLES THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ENGLISH HORSERIPPING EPIDEMIC

Since our bulletins on the English and Swedish horse-ripping epidemics at the end of last year [*FT64:18 & 66:12*], there has been a considerable increase in these baffling atrocities in Humberside, Buckinghamshire and Hampshire.

In late November 1992, horse owners in the area round Scunthorpe, Humberside, set up a horsewatch scheme after several attacks in the county resulted in the death of one 18-year-old mare. Three mares had been attacked at Welton near Hull in October, one of which almost died from internal injuries.

The 1993 horse rippings began in heavy fog during the small hours of Saturday, 2 January – probably between 3:00 and 5:00 am. Chiltern Hills (nicknamed Nell), a 23-year-old mare and former hunter, suffered a foot-long wound, 4-6 inches deep, to her genitals; it was curiously jagged for a knife wound. She was in a stable with another mare on the 53-acre estate of Barclay's Bank director Sir Nigel Mobbs in Lacey Green, near Princes Risborough, Bucks. She would probably have bled to death if the groom had not found her at 7:00am. The wound required 30 stitches and the clitoris had to be completely excised during the 90-minute operation. Nell will no longer be able to breed.

There were two further attacks later that month. On 17 January, Little Jay, a chestnut brood mare, 11, suffered anal bruising and a deep gash across the left hind leg, at Widmer Farm, Lacey Green. Then, on 21 January at Moses Platt Farm, Speen, about a mile away, Ragtime Blues ('Bluey'), a piebald mare, eight, was stabbed in the genitals, leaving a wound six inches deep. Unusually, this was in broad daylight – between 10:30am and 3:30pm – in a field overlooked on all sides by houses and footpaths.



Horse ripping made banner headlines with the death of Mountbatten on 22 January. This 11-year-old, 16-hands-high, Irish hunter mare was attacked in her stable at Cobbs Farm, Four Marks, near Alton in Hampshire. There was deep cuts in her neck and hindquarters. Owner Robert Broderick shut her up for the night after her last feed at 8:00pm and discovered her dead with her head against the door at 9:30 the next morning.

Veterinary surgeon Colin Baxter concluded Mountbatten died between 9:00pm and midnight, of shock or from drugs such as detomidine or ketamine. She had been sexually assaulted and hit across the shoulder with a sharp instrument that could have been a knife.

> "Of the 40 or so horse-rippings in southern England in the last two years which are known to the police, most have occurred in Hampshire."

Mr Broderick's daughter, Fiona, 24, was watching television until midnight, but didn't hear a thing. Her bedroom overlooks the stable and she could normally hear Mountbatten snorting and neighing. (The stable is variously described as 200 yards away or under 100 yards.) But this time she heard nothing, not even the 'lively and very strong' mare lashing out with her feet: a metal bucket was twisted and buckled and the stable showed signs of a struggle.

Of the 40 or so horse-rippings in southern England in the last two years which are known to the police, most have occurred in Hampshire – particularly in the New Forest and Meon Valley. About 25% of assaults involved genital mutilation. Stallions and geldings are stabbed or battered, often around the head, while mares, many of them pregnant, are sexually assaulted with broomstick handles and posts.

There are many variations, however: in the New Forest on 14 September, for instance, battery acid was poured on a mare. Two incidents near Winchester (13 June 1991 and 13 August 1992) involved rope burns. Other incidents have included wire attached to a stallion's penis, claw hammer marks on a horse's back and an airgun wound. As many of the attacks have occurred at the full moon – 14 out of 20 in 1992, for instance – some believe they are connected with Satanism, although substantive evidence is zilch: after all, bright moonlight merely makes it easier to get around at night.

Others suspect rivalry within the Hampshire horse community as the knifings have reduced the value of the animals. The assailant has – or the assailants have – detailed anatomical knowledge, as well as remarkable empathy with the horses to avoid being kicked to bits. The majority view is that the motive is sexual, psychotic, or both.

Speculation is rife among psychologists and journalists about stable hands or vets with grudges or obeying inner

ABOVE: Photofit of the ripper suspect issued by the Hampshire police.
RIGHT: Photograph of the knife found in the fiield.

Owner Katie Buckett comforts her injured mare, Georgie Girl (see 3 Feb opposite).

voices, hunt saboteurs and networking gangs of sado-masochistic zoophiles. There is no perceivable pattern of method, weapon, timing, target, or location and each time the attacker disappears without trace. A horsewatch scheme has been set up in Hampshire, but the task is enormous with 50,000 horses in the county, many kept in huts or fields miles from their owners.

White witches Kevin and Ingrid Carlyon of St Leonards were asked by a Hampshire horse owner last December to investigate possible occult ramifications of the horse attacks. Though they are careful to say there is no ostensible link between these rippings and the occult, they have performed some full moon rituals to track down the attackers, so far without success. They told *FT* that "animal fluids were once used to enhance sexual prowess and stamina, and we think that the people responsible may be trying to aid someone with a sexual problem, possibly a female who cannot bear children." Witchcraft as a motive was also suggested by the British Horse Society. Livestock ripping is often blamed upon pagan rituals.

Many news reports recalled Peter Shaffer's 1973 play *Equus* in which Alan, a stable boy, gouges out the eyes of six horses with an iron spike after a horse witnessed his first and unsuccessful sexual encounter with a girl. It was based on a true story set near Winchester between the wars in which a boy blinded 26 horses.

Some time around 23 January, a man of about 35, with a green jacket and black wellies with a yellow C on them, was seen staring without expression for half an hour at horses in a field near Corehampton, Hampshire. Around the same time, two military policemen from High Wycombe noticed a man lurking near a field where horses were grazing at Speen in Buckinghamshire, scene of an attack on 21 January. He ran away when challenged. A footprint was found and photographed.

On 28 January, police issued the descriptions of two suspects. A young man, about 5ft 7in with mousy hair [**see photofit**], attacked a cow near Alton, Hampshire, on 3 October 1990, which had to be put down; while another man in his 60s, 5ft 3in, with a ruddy complexion and grey hair, was seen interfering with a mare near Alton on 16 March 1991. He was accompanied by two black and white border collies. Police also issued a picture of an eight-inch French kitchen knife found at Park Gate, Hants, near a field in which a Shetland gelding was wounded on 12 July 1992. It had a wooden handle and the letters 'INOX – NUGENT***' engraved on the blade [**see photo**]. By 29 January, reward money for information totalled £18,000. An 18-year-old man from Winchester was questioned on 23 February, but released on police bail.

As a crime, livestock maiming appears to have peaked in the first half of the 19th century, mainly as a way of attacking wealthy farmers and landowners. Methods included poisoning, hamstringing, shooting, strangulation, ear-cutting, stabbing, throat-slitting, stick-thrusting and straightforward ripping. Horses were by far the most common target. In 1840 a Norfolk labourer was transported for 15 years for three attacks on the sexual organs of horses and one of the worst documented cases involved another labourer who tore out the entrails of a live sheep with his bare hands.

Under the Waltham Black Act (1723-1832), anyone caught maiming farm animals was hanged. After 1832, the punishment was transportation and later penal servitude. Anyone caught today would face up to 10 years for criminal damage, or 'sectioned' under the 1983 Mental Health Act, in which case they would probably be released within two years. However, equine vigilantes are out for revenge, and rippers could face lynching.

TABLE OF INCIDENTS

There were horse rippings in Hampshire in 1983 (1 case), 1984 (2), 1985 (1), 1988 (5), 1989 (4), 1990 (4), 1991 (5) and 1992 (20). All the following incidents were in Hampshire unless otherwise stated.

1993: 2 Jan – Lacey Green, Bucks; Chiltern Hills, mare (23), had genitals cut. **4 Jan** – Owslebury: mare (20) had genitals cut and suffered internal bruising from blunt instrument in communal stables. Door had been forced off its hinges and mare found wandering in field. Pages ripped from pornographic magazines had been found on roadsides and in nearby woods. **6 Jan** – Kilmeston: Snow Simball, mare (23) in foal, attacked internally in field. **6 Jan** – Alton: mare found bleeding from her hindquarters in field. **17 Jan** – Lacey Green, Bucks: Little Jay, brood mare (11), suffered cuts to genitals and rear leg. Part of hoof cut off with axe. **21 Jan** – Speen, Bucks: Ragtime Blues, mare (8), stabbed in genitals. **22 Jan** – Four Marks: Mountbatten, Irish hunter mare (11), fatally attacked. **23 Jan** – Newton Abbot, Devon: 3 horses burned to death in probable arson attack. **27 Jan** – Wroughton, Wilts: Chester Barnes, gelding (17), had tail, forelock and mane docked in his stable. **28 Jan** – Peterchurch, Herefordshire: litter of piglets tortured and mutilated. **30 Jan** – Burford, Oxfordshire: stable boy Tim West had green hair dye sprayed in his face when he disturbed two (or three) men who had docked the tales and manes of four horses with sheep shears. One had been sprayed with dye and 'H SCUM' painted on the wall. **1 Feb** – Farnham, Surrey: chestnut mare (23) found with bruising to genitalia and left eye shut due to swelling. Human blood on the floor suggested the attacker had been injured. **2 Feb** – Landford, Wilts: Fax and Leo, two ponies aged seven, had manes and tails clipped. **3 Feb** – Upham: Georgie Girl, pregnant mare (16), mutilated and sexually assaulted with a large object in a field overlooked by several houses. The foal, due in April, was apparently unharmed. A man and a blonde woman in her 30s were seen parked nearby in an F-registered black BMW saloon car. **12 Feb** – Botley: gelding had part of its tail cut off. **15 Feb** – Reddich, Worcs: Arab chestnut mare stabbed to the bone through a thick blanket. Telford, Shropshire: chestnut mare had legs tightly bound with tape. **18 Feb** – Harby, Leics: mare (16) had genitals slashed with sharp instrument. **19 Feb** – Halwill, near Okehampton, Devon: Ralph, grey gelding (9), suffered 4in wound to right shoulder. Whitehill: Lorna, mare (14) sexually assaulted with broom handle, ran into barbed wire, ripping chest. Near Grantham, Lincs: mare (16) slashed with sharp instrument. **21 Feb** – Near Epping, Essex: attack 'of a sexual nature' on mare in field. **26 Feb** – Blythwood Farm, Gypsy Lane, near Bishop's Stortford, Herts: mare in a field had genitals slashed with a knife. **1 Mar** – Botley: two geldings, aged 4 and 12, had tails cut off. **2 Mar** – Langton Herring, Dorset: tails and manes hacked off 17 colts. **5 Mar** – Par, Cornwall: Gypsy, black and white cob (9) in foal, found dead in field with ear cut off, eye gouged out and genitals sliced open. Tara, another mare, had tail and mane hacked off. Trethowel, Cornwall: Natasha, light brown mare (12), stabbed in shoulder and knee.

SOURCES: About 200 national and local newspaper clippings, available in the Archives for Fortean Research.

ARCHIVE GEMS
2: The Black Madonna of Montserrat

JANET BORD, OF THE FORTEAN PICTURE LIBRARY, EXAMINES A STRANGE PHOTO FROM 1984

The reason why some images of the Virgin Mary are black, together with a gazetteer of places where they can be seen, is given in Ean Begg's book *The Cult of the Black Virgin*, published by Arkana in 1985. A fine example of such a black madonna can be found at Montserrat in north-east Spain. According to legend, she was carved in Palestine by St Luke and brought to Montserrat by St Peter. She was hidden in the rocks to save her from the Moors and then rediscovered in the eighth or ninth century. The bishop tried to move the statue to his cathedral, but couldn't shift it, so a shrine was built in the cave. Documentary evidence for devotion to Our Lady of Montserrat dates back as far as 932. Today, a replica stands in the holy cave, while the original is in the hilltop basilica, visited by many pilgrims who come to venerate the Madonna.

In February 1984, P.W. Wheeler, on holiday in Spain from his home in southern England, visited Montserrat and took a photograph of the Madonna on colour print film. When his prints came back, he was surprised to find that the Madonna had a halo around her head, something that was definitely not to be seen when he took the photograph. The halo is especially clear on the right-hand side, and it will be seen that the circle of light does not pass across the face of the statue, but stops at the edge of the head, as though it is passing behind it, and appears as would a real halo, were it suspended over the figure's head.

One's natural reaction is to assume that a light has caused a reflection which coincidentally resembles a halo, and this may be the prosaic explanation for this image; but, even if this is the case, it is a happy and indeed Fortean accident that the reflection gives Our Lady such an appropriate decoration.

DIARY OF A MAD PLANET

DECEMBER 1992–JANUARY 1993

This diary aims to record, in two-month segments, the geophysical highlights of our planet: the tempests and tantrums, the oddities and extremities. Compiled by the editors and various correspondents.

MUDSLIDE **8 December BOLIVIA:** Following torrential rains, mud avalanche buried gold-mining camp at Llipi in about 700,000 cubic feet of mud. Side of mountain collapsed. Hundreds reported dead [at least 210, possible as many as 500]; precise numbers will never be known. Rescue work hindered by continuing rainstorms.

STORM **11December NEW YORK CITY:** Worst storm in decades; fierce winds, heavy rain. Flooding and power problems virtually shut down the subway system for part of the day; considerable disruption to other rail services; bridges closed due to wind-blown debris, major roadways closed due to high water, six feet above normal. "We literally had scuba divers taking people out of their cars on FDR Drive" according to a transportation department spokesperson. Winds gusting to 77 mph caused La Guardia Airport to be closed. The same storm system removed seven feet of beach from several points on the New Jersey coast; a church steeple was blown on to the Franklin bridge. The storms raged from Georgia to New England, killing at least 5 in Pennsylvania.

EARTHQUAKE

12 December INDONESIA: Flores (8.482S 121.930E) Depth: 36km. Magnitude: 7.5R. At least 2,200 killed or missing, 500 injured and 40,000 left homeless. A further 19 killed and 130 houses destroyed on Kalaotoa island. Coastal town of Maumere, 20 miles from the offshore epicentre, almost completely wiped out. Tsunami run-ups of 1000ft with wave hieights of 85ft, along with many landslides, were responsible for most of the deaths. The quake was felt throughout the Sunda Islands, on Sumba and Timor and in southern parts of Sulawesi. Rescue operations hindered by continuing aftershocks, tropical storms and power failures.

WIND **11 January SCOTLAND:** Low pressure of 916 millibars recorded near the Faroe Islands, equalling the British record and causing hurricane-force winds. 100mph winds and 50-foot waves caused further damage to stranded oil-tanker *Braer* in Shetlands. During January, Scotland had some of the windiest weather ever recorded. Glasgow: 57mph gales, gusting to 88mph, highest since 98mph in 1968. Edinburgh: gusting to 81mph. Cairngorm: winds of 106mph, gusting to 169mph.

Road on Hokkaido Island, Japan, ripped apart by the earthquake on 16 January.

ERUPTION **14 January COLOMBIA:** Sudden eruption of the Galeras volcano, killing nine scientists, including Professor Geoffrey Brown, who had entered the crater to monitor gas emissions in an attempt to predict eruptions. They were trying to replace equipment rendered useless by a strong eruption on 22 July 1992. Professor Brown, head of earth sciences at the OPen University, was an expert on measing the minute drop of gravity prior to eruptions; his team had successfully predicted an eruption recently in Costa Rica, but Galeras stole a march on them. The 13,996ft Galeras, declared 'volcano of the decade', has erupted 21 times since 1580. This time, rocks and gases were blasted out in a thick column of smoke that rose 10,000ft.

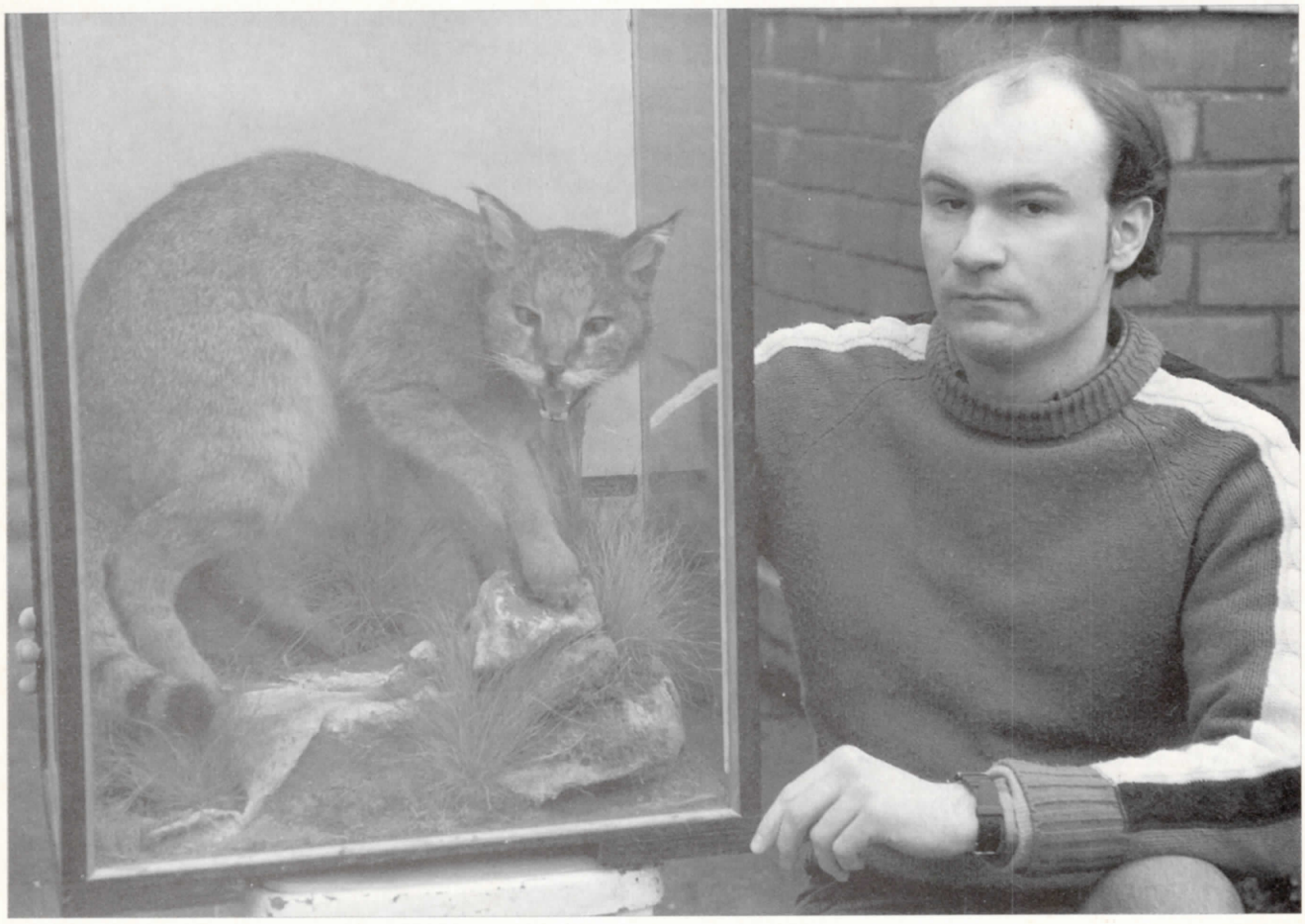
EARTHQUAKE **16 January JAPAN:** Hokkaido (43.403N 143.259E) Depth: 100km. Magnitude: 7.1R. Strongest to hit Japan in 11 years; 2 killed, 614 injured. Landslide, fires, damage to buildings and roads in Kushiro, Hokkaido and Hachinohe on Honshu. The quake was felt in Tokyo and Yokohama.

FLOOD **18 January TURKEY:** Ozengeli, near Bayburt. A "sheet of white" buried 50 houses, killing 16 people trapped under tons of snow, 50 people believed still buried, and voices were still heard under the rubble a day later.

Special thanks to the Global Seismology Group of the British Geological Survey for the earthquake data.

THE LOVECATS

Leading cryptozoologist KARL SHUKER proposes a new solution to the diversity of Big Cat sightings

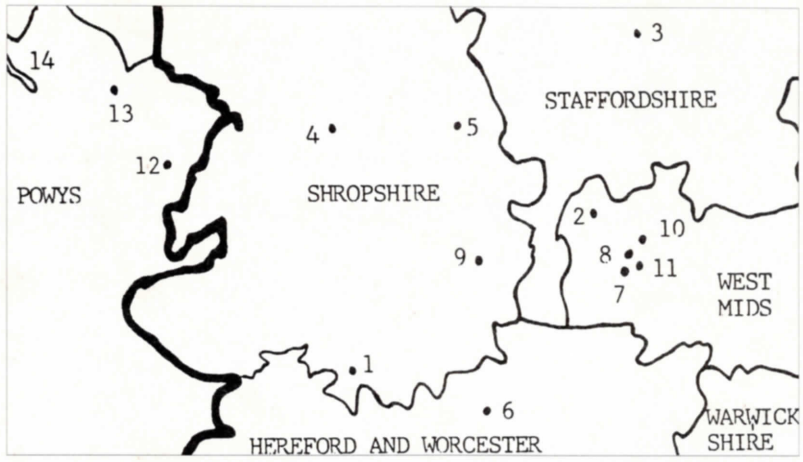


Dr Karl Shuker with the stuffed Asian jungle cat killed by a car near Ludlow in February 1989.

I recently purchased an authentic alien big cat (ABC). It was responsible for many reports of a strange lynx-like creature seen in the Ludlow area of Shropshire – reports dismissed by officialdom as misidentifications of domestic cats, dogs or foxes, before it was killed by a car. On 3 February 1989, farmer Norman Evans found its body near his home; it was tall, with tawny pelage, tufted ears, a fairly short black-ringed tail, striking one-inch-long fangs, and stripes on its upper limbs. It was an adult male specimen of the Asian jungle (swamp) cat, *Felis chaus*, which is not native to Britain or anywhere else in Europe. Investigations revealed that it was a captive-bred escapee that had been living around Ludlow for many months. **[1,2]**

This was not the first jungle cat found in Britain; another adult specimen was killed by a car in Hampshire's Hayling Island on 26 July 1988; as in the Ludlow case, its procurement followed months of discounted sightings. **[3]** In autumn 1992, I succeeded in locating the Ludlow jungle cat, which had been preserved, magnificently, by a taxidermist. After confirming that the relevant ministries had no objection, I purchased it – because it not only provides unequivocal proof that non-native cats are indeed escaping and surviving in our countryside, but, together with the Hayling Island cat, it adds a hitherto-unrecognised yet potentially dramatic dimension to Britain's mystery cat situation.

There are much larger non-native cats roaming Britain, including pumas, lynxes and black panthers. **[4]** These animals could even breed in the wild here, but only if a male and female of the same species met up. Interbreeding between the larger cat species occurs rarely, and the offspring tend to be sterile. The jungle cat is a significant exception to this because it is so closely related genetically to the domestic cat – despite being three times larger. Not only can it mate and reproduce with cats of other species, particularly the



Recent sightings of jungle cats or their hybrids in the West Midlands. 1 - Ludlow (Feb 1989, dead jungle cat found). 2 - Penn (summer 1991). 3 - Weston (summer 1991). 4 - Shrewsbury (Aug 1991). 5 - Telford (Jan 1992). 6 - Great Witley (May 1992). 7 - Tipton (May/June 1992). 8 - Great Bridge (June 1992). 9 - Bridgnorth (June 1992, and spasmodically afterwards). 10 - Wednesbury (Nov-Dec 1992). 11 - West Bromwich (Dec 1992). 12 - Welshpool (Jan 1992). 13 - Llanfyllin (Jan-Feb 1993). 14 - Lake Vyrnwy environs (Feb 1993). I wish to express my especial thanks to Jan Williams for kindly contributing sightings from her files to this map.

domestic cat, but successful matings with domestic cats in captivity have yielded *fertile* offspring. Furthermore, these offspring – after mating with other such hybrids or with either of their parental species – have themselves yielded offspring, and so on. **[5]** Interbreeding may also have occurred in the jungle cat's native Indian habitat. **[6]**

STRANGE-COLOURED HYBRIDS

What has particularly intrigued me about the Hayling Island and Ludlow incidents is the continuation of sightings in both areas long *after* the two specimens were killed – **[7,8]** – suggesting the presence of further jungle cats: for instance, in the Hill Top district of West Bromwich, West Midlands **[9]**; in the Bridgnorth area, not far from Ludlow **[10]**; and near Lake Vyrnwy, just inside Wales' border with Shropshire **[11]**. In other cases, although the cats described seem like jungle cats in general size and shape, their coat colours are different: jet black (near Hayling Island **[8]**); almost white (Penn district of Wolverhampton **[12]**); and pale brown with swirl-like blotches (Tipton, West Midlands **[13]**). Jungle cat *cubs* have spots, but these vanish as they mature.

As I have recently revealed to the media **[14,15]**, from my investigation of cat hybridisation and field research in the West Midlands, I consider it plausible that these strange-coloured cats are hybrids of jungle cats and feral domestic cats. First-generation hybrids tend to resemble their jungle cat parent in general size and shape – including their distinctive tufted ears and relatively short tail – but possess the coat colouration of their domestic cat parent. **[5]** This could explain the odd variations in ABC descriptions from localities known to be the haunts of adult jungle cats.

A FELINE FOX

To obtain an independent authoritative opinion, I discussed these ideas with the internationally-renowned felid geneticist Roy Robinson; he agreed that jungle-domestic cat hybrids were certainly possible, given the close genetic relationship between the two species and the docility (despite its large size) of the jungle cat. **[16]**

Another noteworthy aspect is the apparent presence of one or more jungle cats and hybrids in the West Midlands, a highly industrialised region where one would not expect such cats to survive. Yet, the jungle cat associates closely with man in its native India, living in deserted buildings and prowling close to villages. **[17]** Indeed, it is almost the feline equivalent of our own urban foxes, and may well be invading the same ecological niche here in the West Midlands. I have on file a report of a possible jungle-domestic cat hybrid that was startled by car headlights as it scavenged around dustbins on a Tipton housing estate before dawn in 1992 **[13]**; and reports of a likely pure-bred jungle cat seen at twilight, wandering through a caravan park near Bridgnorth, apparently looking for scraps of food, from June 1992 **[10]**.

Lastly, but no less compelling, is the fact that breeding between the Asian leopard cat, *Felis bengalensis*, and the domestic cat can also yield, sometimes, fertile offspring. **[18]** Indeed, a new breed of 'domestic cat' – the Bengal – is actually a hybrid of these two species, but one whose development, following the initial stage of interspecific hybridisation, has largely involved successive backcrossing between hybrids and domestic cats, reducing the aggressive behaviour inherited from its leopard cat ancestor while retaining that species' highly attractive spotted pelage. **[19]** With this in mind, I note that in 1988, an escapee leopard cat was shot dead on Dartmoor **[20]** and another in Scotland **[21]**; and in 1990 one was killed in Scotland by a car **[22]**. All three seem to have been on the loose for some time, offering the possibility that they mated with feral domestic cats during their freedom, and that hybrids now exist in the wild in those regions.

There is a realistic chance that interbreeding between escapee jungle cats, leopard cats and feral domestic cats has begun in Britain's countryside. If this continues, eventually a self-perpetuating strain of notably large hybrids could become established here – hybrids, moreover, that possess genes from a wild, *non-native* species (unlike the hybrids produced by interbreeding between feral domestic cats and the native Scottish wildcat). The result would be a startling feline parallel to the cross-breeding between native red deer and naturalised Asian sika deer – and an unpredictable addition to the British ecosystem.

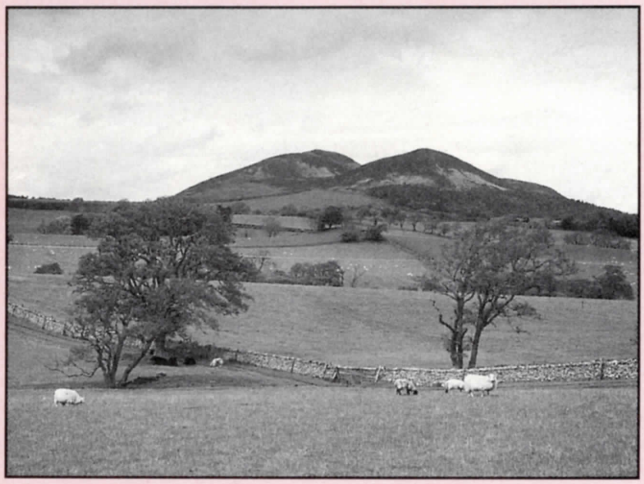
NOTES

1 – "Killer found dead', *South Shropshire Journal* 10 Feb 1989. **2 –** 'Wild cat sightings', *South Shropshire Journal* 17 Feb 1989. **3 –** 'Hit and run driver kills mystery wildcat', *The News*, Portsmouth, 28 July 1988. **4 –** Karl P.N. Shuker, *Mystery Cats of the World* (Robert Hale, 1989) pp33-69. **5 –** J.M. Jackson & J. Jackson, 'The hybrid jungle cat', *Newsletter of the Long Island Ocelot Club*, 1970, v11, p45. **6 –** Reginald I. Pocock, 'On English domestic cats', *Proceedings of the Zoological Society of London*, 1907, pp143-168. **7 –** Jan Williams, 'A confusion of cats', *SCAN News*, Jan 1993, n1, pp5-8. **8 –** Nick Maloret, 'Swamp cat fever', *Fortean Times*, autumn 1990, n55, pp44-46. **9 –** Fred Rackham, personal communication, 2 Feb 1993. **10 –** Robert Baker, personal communication, 27 Feb 1993. **11 –** Harry Wilson, personal communications, 29 Jan & 14 Feb 1993. **12 –** Jan Williams, personal communication, 27 Jan 1993. **13 –** Ron Mills, personal communication, 27 Jan 1993. **14 –** Alison Jones, 'The missing lynx', *Birmingham Eve. Mail* 29 Jan 1993. **15 –** 'Danger cats roaming region', *Wolverhampton Express & Star* 30 Jan 1993. **16 –** Roy Robinson, personal communication, 1 Feb 1993. **17 –** C.A.W. Guggisberg, *Wild Cats of the World* (David & Charles, 1975) p45. **18 –** Ralph Luce, 'Hybrid cats', *Cats Magazine*, Jan 1974, pp8-9. **19 –** 'Gentle whimsey proves a leopard *can* change its spots', *Daily Mail* 24 June 1991. **20 –** Karl P.N. Shuker, 'Feline clues on the Moors', ***Fortean Times***, summer 1989, n52, pp26-27. **21 –** Mark Porter, 'Scots leopard shot', *Sunday Telegraph* 6 March 1988. **22 –** 'Leopard type cat found dead on moor', *Berwickshire News* 23 Aug 1990.

SECRET COUNTRY

Mysterious places to visit in Great Britain compiled by Janet & Colin Bord

8: Eildon Hills, Roxburghshire, Borders Region



Eildon Hills dominate the gentle countryside around them

In legend, the hills got their prominent shape when an evil spirit, at the command of the magician Michael Scot, split one large hill into three. In the Iron Age, a great hillfort was built on top of the northernmost hill, the still visible ramparts forming the largest hillfort in Scotland.

A Roman fort was also built in this area, at Newstead, east of Melrose, and it was somewhere near here that Thomas the Rhymer (Thomas of Erceldoune) met the Fairy Queen. She took him into her kingdom under Eildon and he lived in fairyland for three years, though it seemed like three days to him.

In another tale, Canonbie Dick, a horse trader who was riding over the hills at night, saw an old man who bought the horses Dick had been unable to sell. Dick made several sales to the old man on subsequent occasions, and one night was taken by him into the hill called Lucken Hare. Inside Dick saw a large cavern where lay horses and knights all sleeping - and the old man revealed himself to be Thomas of Erceldoune. He gave Dick the choice of drawing a sword or blowing a horn, saying he would die if he chose wrongly. Dick chose the horn and blew a blast on it, whereupon all the knights and horses awoke. He grabbed the sword and heard a voice crying:

Woe to the coward that ever he was born;
Who did not draw the sword before he blew the horn.

Then he found himself whisked out of the hill in a whirlwind and was discovered lying on a bank by some shepherds, to whom he told his strange tale before he died.

Though steep in places, the four-mile Eildon Walk leading off the B6359 in Melrose will take you through the hills and past the place where Dick entered them; the hills can also be clearly seen from the surrounding roads.

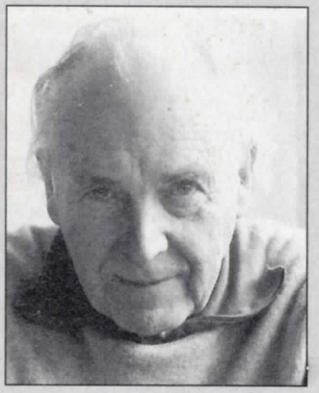
In one version of the tale, the knights inside the hill were King Arthur's men; and there are many other hills in Britain where they are believed to lie sleeping, awaiting the call to come to the country's aid. It is also said that there is so much gold in the Eildon Hills that sheep grazing there develop yellow teeth!

In Melrose Abbey to the north, Michael Scot is said to lie buried: his alleged grave is next to the double piscina in the south transept chapel nearest to the presbytery, set into the floor and with a cross on it. He was a real person who lived in the 13th century, but there is no proof that he practised magic. Jennifer Westwood in *Albion* calls him 'perhaps the leading scholar of Western Europe in the early thirteenth century'. In his writings he condemned magic, but he was interested in science and astrology, and somehow an assortment of tales of magical feats, mostly located in Cumbria, Northumberland and southern Scotland, have become attached to his name. He was said to have powers like those of the giants and, with the Devil's help, it was he who built Hadrian's Wall; in one night the two also made Watling Street.'Michael the Warlock' was said to have controlled the witches in Glenluce in Wigtown. To keep them out of mischief, he made them perform tasks like spinning ropes from sea-sand and threshing barley chaff. Scot was believed to be buried with his magic books - including such works as *The Fire Spangs of Faustus* and *Black Clud's Wyme Laid Open* - in the abbey at Glenluce. Scot was also said to be buried at the Abbey of Holm Cultram in Cumberland.

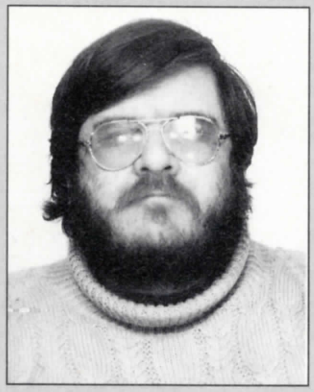
Whether or not Scot is buried at Melrose Abbey, the substantial ruins are worth visiting, as too are the fairy-haunted hills of Eildon. FT

The now ruined Glenluce Abbey where Scot once cast his magic spells

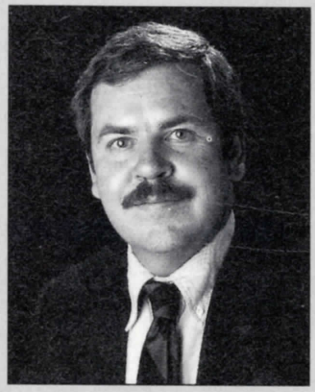
FORUM



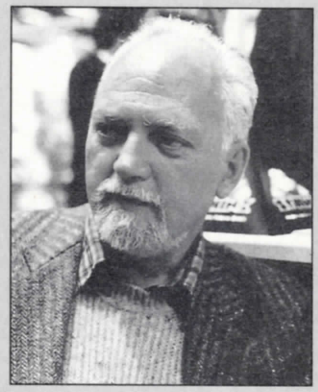
PSYCHIC RESEARCH: Brian Inglis was a past editor of The Spectator and veteran of over 20 books on parapsychology and fringe medicine. See obituary on page 16.



CRYPTOZOOLOGY: Jonathan Downes is a writer and researcher in zoology and co-founder of the Centre for Fortean Zoology in Exeter, Devon.



SCIENCE WATCH: Dennis Stacy, a freelance journalist living in Texas, edits the monthly *Journal* of MUFON, the largest UFO research organisation in the USA.



METAPHYSICS: Robert Anton Wilson, best known for his *Illuminatus* novels, has published 26 books and lectures at Futurist conferences.

Psychic Research

An Hallucination To Sit On

Brian Inglis sees no reason why apparitions should not be tangible

Of the teachers who tried to instil some discipline into my passion for history, one whom I remember with particular affection was 'Thompy' – J.M. Thompson. In retrospect this is surprising, as he was a sceptic; a species which, though there have been other exceptions, I have not found to be congenial.

Thompson's 1911 *Miracles in the New Testament*, in which he explained them away along rationalist lines, had led to his being thrown out of the Church of England – 'de-frocked', as the term was then: maybe still is? Though if so, the Bishop of Durham ought surely to have had the same treatment. Having myself just shed the Protestantism of my upbringing, I had no inclination to argue with Thompy at the time. I would now.

The other day, for example, I heard or read of somebody – perhaps it *was* the Bishop of Durham? – dismissing the Resurrection. Wary though I am of the New Testament as history, I can see no problem in accepting that the disciples may have hallucinated Jesus after his crucifixion, in a form real enough for doubting Thomas to carry out the celebrated test, and to be convinced that it really was Jesus, risen from the dead.

This brought back to my mind a story I had come across earlier, and which had set me wondering about the power of hallucinations to create what to all appearances is 'matter' – a much less implausible notion than it used to be, thanks to the quantum physicists.

In 1954, Mr and Mrs Allan (not their real names), out for a walk in the country,

> "Sitters at D D Home's gatherings were able to shake disembodied hands"

were taking a rest on a bench in a clearing when Mrs Allan was suddenly overcome by a feeling of intense fear. Without looking round, she 'saw' behind her three men in clerical garb, whose appearance suggested they belonged to a time past; two of them radiating hostility. Her husband, touching her, said she felt like a corpse; they got up and walked away.

A fairly commonplace ghost story, certainly, except for the mystery of the way Mrs Allan 'saw' behind her back (she was too paralysed with fear to turn round). But there was a sequel. She felt she must, at some point, return and exorcise the experience. Two years later she did, only to find that there was no clearing of the kind where they had sat on the bench; nor, she was assured, were there ever benches on that part of the estate.

Recounting the tale in *The Seen and the Unseen*, published in 1977, Andrew MacKenzie suggested there was a link between Mrs Allan's experience and the Versailles 'adventure' of the Misses Moberly and Jordain in 1901 (which sceptics are still trying, unavailingly, to explain away). Perhaps Mrs Allan had been in the grip of a retrocognitive hallucination. But, if so, how do we account for the fact that they sat down? "It is not possible to sit on a spectral bench", MacKenzie asserted. "Anybody who tries to do so will land on the earth with a bump."

This raises a curious issue. There are many well-attested accounts of séances at which the sitters have been allowed to test for themselves that the materialisations are 'real'. In light good enough to see what was happening, sitters at D.D. Home's gatherings reported, they were able not merely to observe disembodied hands, but also to shake them. Charles Richet, a Nobel prizewinner in physiology, found that forms he watched materialising were anatomically correct.

In the Allan story, the case for materialisation is admittedly weakened by the fact that only Mrs Allan hallucinated. But in general, "I fail to see" (as I wrote in a review of MacKenzie's book), "why one should not be able to sit on a materialised bench".

The Art of Jumping To Conclusions

Jonathan Downes shows that there are zoological mysteries right under our noses

In 1955, Belgian zoologist and jazz musician Bernard Heuvelmans published his *Sur la Piste des Betes Ignorées* (later translated as *On the Track of Unknown Animals*), an extraordinary book bristling with ideas which convincingly revealed the whereabouts of 30 or 40 hitherto unknown large animal species around the world. He also invented the science of cryptozoology, the study of unknown animals.

Unfortunately, none of the animals he described have been formally identified. Every major investigation into relict hominids, serpentiform lake monsters or surviving dinosaurs has been a remarkable failure; the Nessie photographs of Frank Searle and Lachlan Stuart along with Florida's giant penguin footprints have been exposed as fakes; severe doubt has been cast on the yeti footprint photographs of Eric Shipton; and the Minnesota Iceman and Patterson Bigfoot movie are decidedly iffy.

Russian yeti investigator Boris Porshnev has been accused of manipulating his data to suit his own ends. The so-called 'gargoyle head' photographed in Loch Ness by the Rhines/Edgerton team is very similar to a tree stump dredged from the loch bottom at the same location. Even the famous 'surgeon's photograph' of Nessie, described as having "the unmistakable mark of a living object", has had serious doubts raised about it.

While the sceptics claim that these animals do not exist, I would merely suggest that many cannot be accounted for within a purely zoological framework; they are unlikely to be put behind bars or stuffed for a South Kensington glass case.

In common with many amateur naturalists, as a schoolboy I bemoaned the fact that British natural history seemed dull and staid when compared with exotic foreign lands. I no longer share this sentiment. Over the past three years, I have been doing research for a book on the cryptofauna of southwestern England, and my findings bear out Heuvelmans' maxim that there are lost worlds everywhere.

There is evidence that a wide range of native British species such as red squirrels, pine martens, polecats, wild cats and possibly even the magnificent white-tailed sea eagle were not, as is usually believed, wiped out in the region by the Victorian gamekeeper, but that relict populations survive. They coexist with hitherto overlooked feral populations of introduced pumas, lynxes, wolves and so on which stalk the high moorlands. If such a diversity of unsuspected fauna can exist in a heavily populated and traversed region, then what mysteries remain to be discovered within the depths of Brazil and Borneo?

> "It is now thought, for instance, that there are wider genetic gaps between left-handed and right-handed people than between members of different races."

Today, we face the greatest upheaval in the taxonomic zoology of our biosphere since the last Ice Age, and cryptozoological disciplines will certainly be needed in coming to terms with it. Firstly, as the average mean temperature of the world increases, either through pollution or natural mechanisms unknown to us, western Europe becomes habitable to species traditionally confined to warmer areas further south.

Secondly, over the last 30 years, the gun laws across Europe have been tightened up dramatically in response to terrorism and peasant farmers no longer have high-powered rifles to pick off rare animals. Thirdly, the physical barriers of the Iron Curtain have been removed, allowing the freer passage of animals moving west. Wolves have been seen in France, Switzerland and Austria for the first time in decades and there are also rumours that bears are making a comeback. The Channel Tunnel will also facilitate the movement of species from the mainland to the British Isles.

One of the great fallacies of cryptozoology is that it is concerned with relict populations of ancient species when it is the emergent species which are of far greater interest. The discovery of three apparently new cat species (the onza, the Kellas cat and the king cheetah) apparently emerging from known species throws interesting new light on the mechanics of feline genetics, especially as all three, though apparently unrelated, have emerged at approximately the same time and share a startling number of characteristics.

Taxonomy governed by purely Linnæan rules has been overtaken by recent advances in genetic fingerprinting, which suggest that differences between species may be far more subtle than we realised. It is now thought, for instance, that there are wider genetic gaps between left-handed and right-handed people than between members of different races. The omniverse is governed by a multitude of laws, only a fraction of which are known to us. Traditional zoology has had its day; it is time for a transformation analogous to the changes in mathematics wrought by chaos theory.

During my research, I repeatedly met scepticism and even hostility from established scientists whom I thought would be only too willing to help me. More disturbingly, I had similar reactions from what has become the hidebound and reactionary cryptozoological establishment. Cryptozoologists should lead the way with a new methodology for the new millennium.

FORUM is a column in which anyone with something to say about a particular field, theory or incident can share their thoughts with our readership. If you'd like to join in with an opinion on any area of Forteana, send it in to the editorial address. Ideal length: 500-1000 words. Please enclose a head and shoulders photo of yourself with all Forum submissions.

Alien Bastards!

Dennis Stacy charts new developments in the standard Abduction Scenario

For years, the UFO abduction phenomenon seemed fairly static. The Standard Abduction Scenario, first outlined in detail by American folklorist Eddie Bullard in his massive two-volume 1987 study *UFO Abductions: The Measure of a Mystery*, delineated eight discrete steps or stages of the experience. In order, these were capture, examination, conference, tour, otherworldly journey, theophany, return and aftermath.

Bullard based his analysis on a review of some 300 abduction cases then extant in the world literature. While the underlying structure wasn't absolutely rigid – some 'abductees' might not undergo all eight stages; in other cases the sequence wasn't exactly the same – it did seem to be there in general, just underneath the surface, in ways that would mitigate against random dreams, individual daytime fantasising and so on. In other words, it seemed to reflect a *physical* procedure – with a beginning, middle and end – in the same way that, say, a terrestrial appendectomy or other surgical process would. The minor details might vary from time to time, but the basic whole remained largely and essentially intact. [See the FT interview with Bullard, ***FT60:46-49.***]

But a funny thing happened on the way to the hospital. In the same year that Bullard published his monumental survey of the subject (under the auspices of the Fund for UFO Research), New York artist and author Budd Hopkins came out with his second commercially popular study of the abduction phenomenon, *Intruders: The Incredible Visitations at Copley Woods*. The first had been *Missing Time* (1981). Shifts subtle and not so subtle were suddenly introduced into the original 'staid' abduction scenario, so much so that I believe we can now begin to think in terms of a New Revised Abduction Scenario (NRAS). This feeling was reinforced recently by the appearance of Dr David Jacobs' *Secret Life: Firsthand Accounts of UFO Abductions* (1992). Jacobs, a professor of history at Temple University, Philadelphia, draws many, if not most, of his own abduction cases straight from Hopkins' own databank, primarily as personal referrals.

In a word, this major new wrinkle in the evolution of the Standard Abduction Scenario has to do with the abrupt appearance of *hybrid babies*, presumably the genetically engineered byproduct of close encounters between unwitting (and unwilling) humans and extraterrestrial beings. When Bullard did his research, such 'star children' simply weren't there. The closest hint that any extraterrestrial visitor might be up to terrestrial hanky-panky was a single 1957 case involving a Brazilian farmer, Antonio Villas Boas, who claimed he was frogmarched aboard a UFO late one night and forced to submit to sex with a fair, reddish-haired (both above and below) beauty from outer space. She reportedly pointed to her belly and then to the sky above to signify that the sex act had been successful. But beginning with *Intruders* and culminating in *Secret Life*, reports of alien bastards are now almost as commonplace as crop circles and shopping mall sightings of Elvis Presley.

> "...reports of alien bastards are now almost as commonplace as crop circles and shopping mall sightings of Elvis Presley."

In the interval, Bullard's otherworldly journey seems to have dropped off the abduction map altogether. Perhaps the aliens were simply cutting back on their travel expenses like everyone else, or perhaps Hopkins and Jacobs were somehow – consciously or otherwise – selecting their cases to fit the new scenario. Two other of Bullard's original stages also appear to be suffering from recession – or inflation. What was once a general medical examination, for instance, now involves sex-specific procedures. Men report having their sperm extracted, women their ova, both under externally constrained conditions equivalent to cosmic rape.

Reports of nasal and cranial 'implants' are also bruited about, along with cases of 'missing' fœtuses, none of which have currently been substantiated by objective medical evidence. In addition, the onboard tour of the UFO is now confined in the main to a visit to the ship's nursery or incubatorium, where female abductees in particular are frequently asked to hold and nurse their supposedly hybrid offspring. Hundreds of other wan, seemingly premature, babies may be glimpsed – or at least remembered – under such circumstances. For the most part, these 'memories' are obtained in the course of regressive hypnosis; that is, while the percipient is in an altered state of consciousness.

The abducting 'Greys' – so-called because of their skin colour – are routinely described as less than four feet tall, often much less. They appear to consist of little more than oversized heads and eyes, the latter commonly characterised as a deep pool of liquid black. Their other physical features seem indistinct at best; if they have any obvious external genitalia, for example, they are rarely if ever reported. Ditto for nipples, navels, ears, body hair, tattoos, or any other readily identifiable physical 'defects' which would lend them a significant semblance of individual personality. Noses and mouths are said to be vestigial. If they communicate at all, it is by telepathy, words heard in the head. Conspicuous by its absence is anything remotely resembling a sense of humour. Displays of curiosity are cursory, if that.

So, what *is* going on? I wish I knew. What I do doubt is that the abduction phenomenon, as such, is taking place in real space and time. Some abductionists have recently suggested – based on a poll of 6,000 adults conducted by the prestigious Roper Organization – that as many as four million people in the US alone may have had the abduction experience. For some reason, abductions – like Madonna and Big Macs – remain a peculiarly American export. Still, when such numbers are extrapolated worldwide, and when we take into consideration the fact that many abductees report experiences dating back to early childhood, we are forced to consider two choices: either humanity is the collective victim of several hundred *million* forced abductions by humanoid beings from another planet in just the last 30 years or so; or else the fault, and origin, dear Brutus, lies not among the stars, but within ourselves.

More thoughts about the latter possibility next time. Assuming, of course, that you haven't been abducted in the meantime.

Atheistic Religions

Robert Anton Wilson exposes the dogmatic circular reasoning of the self-styled 'skeptics'

A year ago, I met three members of the Committee for Scientific Investigation for Claims of the Paranormal at a UFO convention. They all confronted me with undisguised hostility.

Of course, as a professional satirist, I have gotten accustomed to encountering displeasure from people with emotionally deep opinions, but the CSICOPeans really shocked me. Other dogmatic people these days at least put up a 'front' of courtesy and adult behaviour. The CSICOP faction had no 'front' at all. To say it in a positive rather than a negative way, they showed a refreshing lack of adult hypocrisy, and seemed "as open and honest as children at play".

It took me a while to realise that the attitude I had encountered deserves the title of 'devout religiosity' as much as anything one reads about in histories of the Dark Ages. CSICOP's use of the word 'scientific' in their organisational title had confused me. Actually CSICOP *hasn't even attempted scientific investigation since 1982*, after their first effort in that direction ended in fiasco. (Their principal investigator, Dr Dennis Rawlins, saying they had altered his data, cried 'Foul!' and resigned.)

CSICOP keeps the word 'science' for the sake of swank, like the Creation Scientists and Christian Scientists. It makes them seem 'modern'. (For similar reasons, Marx offered his Millennialist Utopia as a kind of 'science'.)

Regarding some atheistic movements as religions may perplex those who think religiosity requires a God or Goddess of some sort. However, several writers - including Carl Jung, Arnold Toynbee and Eric Hoffer – suggest that we should consider communism and fascism as 'atheistic religions' or 'religions without god'.

In 1960 I met Ayn Rand, the creator of Objectivism, another religion without God, which claimed to have the final solution to *all* problems in epistemology, ontology, economics and politics. If anybody disagreed with Objectivist dogma, Rand said (in several books and in my meeting with her) that they just hadn't learned to reason correctly: all *objective people* did agree with Objectivism. Since in her system 'objective people' meant those who agreed with Objectivism, this logic remained as impenetrable as any closed circle.

> "God has nothing to do with religiosity. One becomes part of a religion by group-sharing of certain enthusiastic opinions."

'God', you see, has nothing to do with religiosity. One becomes part of a religion by group-sharing of certain enthusiastic opinions (eg. Christian and Islamic fundamentalism, fascism, communism, Objectivism, the CSICOP catechism). The idea of 'God' may attach to these group-bonds, or may remain totally absent. 'Religion' essentially means the group-bonding itself, as the etymology should have told us. (*Religare*, to bind together; cf. *fascis*, to bind rods and sticks in a bundle, origin of 'fascism'.)

I think this explains why CSICOP has naively blundered into a succession of libel suits. The two latest suits, by Uri Geller and Dr Elton Byrd, seem likely to bankrupt CSICOP, some say. (A CSICOP spokesman had accused Geller of driving a man to suicide, and it appears that the man died of diabetes; and the same spokesman accused Dr Byrd of serving time for child molestation, and Byrd never served time for that or any crime.)

CSICOPeans commit libels and slanders with a wayward and childish innocence, because they genuinely believe that anyone who disagrees with their Final Answers must belong to the criminal class. Similarly, in the Dr Rawlins case, they simply changed his data with no bad conscience at all, because they had a Higher Morality. Historians calls this 'pious fraud' when theists do it; I think it remains equally pious when done by atheists.

Dr Marcello Truzzi resigned from CSICOP because they would not print dissident views in their journal, *Skeptical Enquirer*. But no religious journal prints Satan's side of an argument, does it? Well, anyone who dissents from CSICOP dogma appears to them as Satanic.

Once one recognises fascism, communism, Objectivism and the CSICOP belief system as modern religions, none of the behaviour of these groups appears surprising anymore. Religious people simply exist in a different symbolic universe from lawyers, philosophers or scientists, who all recognise that we can never find any final 'truth' – that all seeming truth can still provoke honest debate and may still need revision.

The religious have, or think they have, Eternal Truths that can never change – and CSICOP, like Scientology, remains firmly entrenched in the camp of the True Believers even when invoking the name of science.

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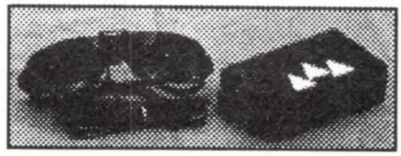

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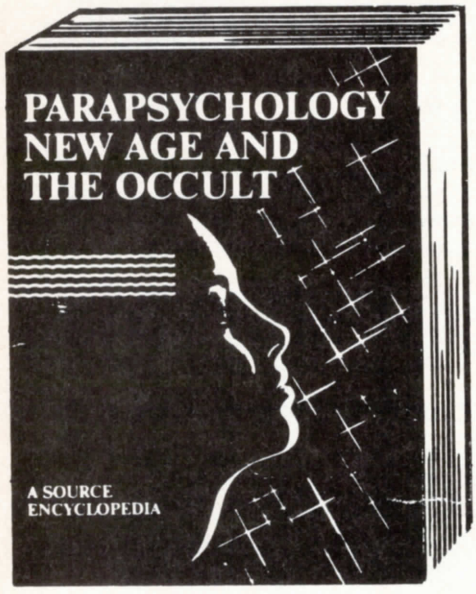

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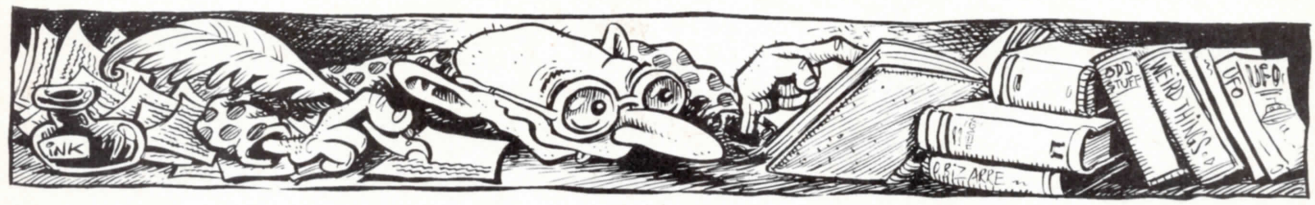


REVIEWS

THE SIGN AND THE SEAL

A QUEST FOR THE LOST ARK OF THE COVENANT by Graham Hancock.

Heinemann, London. 1992, hb £16.99, pp588, illus, notes, refs, index.

Warning! I am about to reveal a great and sacred mystery. Those who don't want the surprise spoilt should cover the next paragraph.

The lost Ark of the Covenant currently resides in the Holy of Holies of the Church of St Mary of Zion, in the town of Axum in Tigrayan-occupied Ethiopia. It is guarded by a single monk, though there are a few armed Tigrayan rebels in the town itself. A small assault team, a couple of helicopters, some smoke bombs and it's yours.

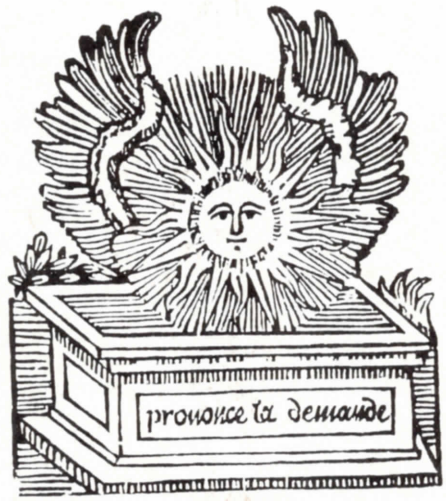
That's right! The Big Box of Goodies made by Belazeel for Moses' two tablets – which brought the house down at Jericho and smote the Philistines without the Israelites lifting a finger – is sitting quietly in a small town in war-torn Africa. This is Hancock's thesis, though it must be said that he didn't actually *see* the Ark itself – that is a privilege reserved for the reluctant monk guarding it with his life.

The Sign and the Seal, which is structured as a quest for the Ark, starts badly with a rounding-up of suspects familiar to anyone who has skimmed the *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* genre: Chartres cathedral, the Knights Templar, and Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parsifal*. The *Kebra Nagast* and a number of other ancient texts are given the once-over for clues, and Hancock finds it easy to unearth hidden agendas in his source material. The Scottish adventurer James Bruce – he authored the classic *Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile in the Years 1768-1773* – comes across as scheming and duplicitous in his desire to avoid telling the truth about the secrets of North Africa. And, of course, he was a Mason, which ties him in neatly with the Knights Templar.

Chartres cathedral, on the other hand, is a positive mine of coincidence and meaning; the notion of secret knowledge being one of the author's powerful obsessions. Hancock happens to go there on holiday and engages in a thorough analysis of the Old Testament secrets encrypted into the sculptures and official guidebook. They lead him to the saga of Parsifal, and one gigantic leap follows another until Hancock has reconstructed the Greatest Secret of All Time.

Once his obsessions have been taken aboard, the book speeds up as Hancock jets around Europe and the Middle East in his quest to prove that God's Box was carted off to Ethiopia by a group of Jewish priests who fled the bad King Manasseh during the latter part of the seventh century BC.

Though the author's style is that of an



interested amateur, he has astonishing access to the major academics in the relevant disciplines and an equal willingness to rubbish any orthodoxy he happens to disagree with. Following Hancock's own line of enquiry, however, requires the reader to make regular leaps of faith.

I remain unconvinced that the Knights Templar were necessarily the white strangers wandering around Ethiopia in the late 12th century, though Hancock sees their 'Croix Pattes' everywhere. One has to wonder how, if the Ark was so important to the relationship between God and his Old Testament Israelites, Ethopia's Nestorian Christian upstarts were able to swipe it. The argument of the *Kebra Nagast*, a 13th century Ethiopian text, that "the Kingdom of the Jews shall be made an end of and the Kingdom of Christ shall be constituted" really doesn't wash. The Ark had spent much of the previous two millennia effortlessly zapping anyone who tried to snaffle it.

The Sign and the Seal has clearly not been written for religious reasons; Hancock supports the theory that although miracles can be associated with the Ark, they were worked by the ancient hi-tech used in its construction. This is the launch-pad for a voyage into the mysteries of the ancients – particularly the Egyptians – whose stock of secret knowledge (see von Däniken) was passed to a select bunch of Pharaoh's closest advisors. They included Moses, who, after the bullrushes and Pharaoh's daughter incidents, went on to acquire the technical wizardry need to build the 'Ark as Gizmo'.

The book's chief weakness is that Hancock sets out determined to prove his thesis. To make matters worse, he depends on so many "accidental strokes of luck" that one is tempted to ask whether he himself is not of the Masonic persuasion. With disbelief firmly suspended, and critical safety-valve tightly screwed down, *The Sign and the Seal* is a thoroughly engaging read, written in an easy-to-follow, breathless style by someone who is absorbed by his task. Highly recommended for conspiracy fans; unsuitable for historians and archæologists.

Richard Furlong

TIBETAN MEDICAL PAINTINGS

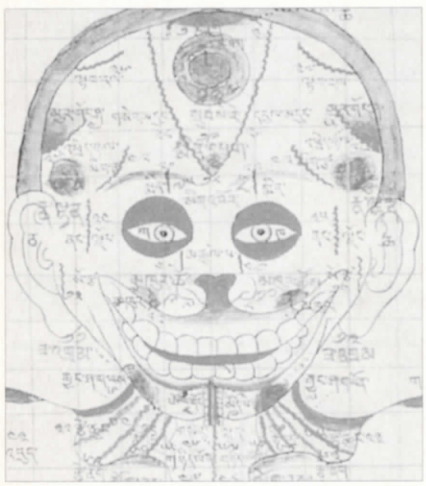
edited by Yuri Parfionovitch, Gyurme Dorje and Fernand Meyer.

Serinda (10 Parkfields, London SW15 6NH); & Abrams, New York. Two vols, hb silkbound, slipcased £130 / $195. Vol 1 has 76 colour plates, vol 2 has 77 b&w plates, notes, bib, index.

The drawing open of the Iron Curtain has revealed vast eastern panoramas. Amongst the many religious artifacts stored in the 'Museum of Atheism' in Ulan-Ude, near Lake Baikal in Buryiat, was discovered a magnificent collection of 76 paintings illustrating the *Blue Beryl*, a famous 17th century Tibetan treatise on medicine. The *Blue Beryl* (or *Vaidurya Nyonpo*) was compiled by Desi Sangye Gyamtso (1653-1705), regent to the fifth Dalai Lama, during whose reign both the

Potala and the adjacent medical college of Chakpori were constructed. The Buryiat paintings, produced around 1920, are exact replicas of the original 17th century illustrations commissioned by Sangye Gyamtso. Their prime purpose was to visually impress the entire medical teachings into the memories of generations of Tibetan doctors.

Many of the vivid paintings can be read in cartoon-like strips, from top to bottom, with more than 10,000 individual illustrations conveying the whole spectrum of Tibetan medicine. The subjects illustrated include many intricate anatomical charts showing the structures of the skeleton, muscles, vital organs, blood system, nerves, and the systems of psychic nerve channels and points used in acupuncture, moxibustion, cauterization and blood-letting. There are chapters on embryology; sexuality; diet and conduct; omens and dream interpretation; demon possession; surgical instruments; diagnosis by pulse, tongue and urine analysis.



The *materia medica* is extremely fascinating, with hundreds of botanical, mineral and animal extracts, meticulously painted and identified. Who would conceive that the leather sole, heel and instep of an old shoe could have different medical properties? Or that a widow's underpants guard against epilepsy? Or that earth from a mousehole that faces east can be applied as a compress for cold wind disorders? The three sisters of *Macbeth*'s blasted heath would surely have given an arm and a leg for this knowledge.

Volume One comprises the colour plates with facing summary chapters, translated from the *Blue Beryl*. Volume Two consists of numbered monochrome plates, with individual captions translated on the facing page. The work is simply magnificent and unique, exquisitely produced and certainly one of the most important publications of this century. There are no fences bounding this field of alternative medicine, because it represents a synthesis of Ayurvedic, Central Asian, Chinese and indigenous Tibetan medicine – the wisdom of more than two millennia distilled into beautiful holistic imagery, which fills the viewer with awe, wonder and humility.

Robert Beer

FINDERS KEEPERS
by Rosamund Wolff Purcell and Stephen Jay Gould.

Peter the Great – the larger than life (6ft 7ins and with appetites to match) czar of Russia – was catholic in his kleptomania. As well as locks of his own hair and keepsakes from his interest in dentistry (including a tooth from an unfortunate "fast-walking messenger"), he bought complete collections from all over Europe, among them Frederick Ruysch's stock of around 2,000 anatomical preparations. A child's severed arm rises gracefully from a lace sleeve, gently holding an eye socket. A fœtal skeleton holding a string of pearls asks: "Why should I long for the things of the world?" Skulls bemoan their fate by weeping into handkerchiefs made of brain meninges.

The eight collectors featured in this book seem, in many ways, as strange as their collections. Van Heurn went for symmetry; perfectly arranged rows of flattened moles with pale little paws; or a tableau of domestic dogs with identikit snarls. With perfect economy, a flat rat pokes out of a recycled envelope, its Latin name replacing the original recipient's. Eugen Dubois collected casts of brains – bats, tigers, squirrels, monkeys – all neatly labelled and prettily boxed. Walter Rothschild found banking distasteful and instead drove his zebras down Piccadilly and collected Birds of Paradise (nearly all the known species and 17 that he described for the first time).

Purcell's photographs are haunting; all taken in natural light and eschewing all trickery. Gould's writing illuminates them. It is beautifully produced and well-edited, though there is no index. *Hutchinson Radius (Random Century), London. 1992, hb £19.99, pp158.*

Val Stevenson

UFO ENCOUNTERS
by Jerome Clark.

It would be too easy to dismiss this richly-illustrated and glossily-presented large-format book as yet another of those high-volume compilation works that pre-digest a subject for the thousands of subscribers who are more interested in a good-looking row of book spines. The large type and larger leading suggests that a slim work was padded out, and that no amount of nicely printed colour illustrations can disguise the fact that this is a comparatively thin book.

Don't let that deter you. *UFO Encounters* is, in fact, a very concise overview of the UFO phenomenon in all its facets, written by a skilled and knowledgable historian of the subject (Clark), aided by Marcello Truzzi, an equally respected scholar of the anomalous. The subject is divided into bite-sized chunks dealing with key people, places, incidents, objects and ideas. It is ideal for young people or a first encounter with a complex subject, and does not baffle the newcomer with too many details, references or footnotes. A serious ufologist might consider this shallow and worthless, but it doesn't pretend to be anything other than a well-presented, well-written introduction. That is something we could do with more of – and it is good to see that Jerome Clark can find time away from his absorbing encyclopædic work to write for the 'common man'. *Publications International, 7373 N. Cicero Ave, Lincolnwood, IL 60646, USA. 1992, hb price unknown, pp128, illus, index.*

Bob Rickard

MILLENNIUM PROPHECIES
by A.T. Mann.

Dramatic events, such as the Second Coming and the End of the World, have been forecast many times, but don't appear to have happened yet. As the year 2000 looms, both modern prophets and those of earlier times seem to be in agreement about the momentous changes that will mark this period. I remain unconvinced because I can't see why the date should be significant, as the chronology is manmade and quite arbitrary.

This book covers a wide range of prophets (eg. Nostradamus, Cayce, the Great Pyramid, Mother Shipton, etc) and prophecies (eg. Age of Aquarius, cataclysms, End of World, Antichrist, etc), and will be of interest to everyone who wants to know what is supposed to happen. A good read for those of an apprehensive disposition – and now that millennarianism figures so strongly in the news, a relevant one. *Element Books, Shaftesbury & Rockport, MA, USA. 1992, pb £5.99, pp143, notes, bib, index, illus.*

Janet Bord

CASPAR HAUSER
by Jakob Wassermann.

The true story of this mysterious youth who appeared in Nuremberg in 1828 knowing only his name and apparently possessing supernatural powers has inspired many artists, including Verlaine, Rilke and Werner Herzog. Wassermann was one of the world's most popular novelists of the 1920s and 30s. His book about Hauser is a luxuriant allegory of man's inhumanity to man, a Gothic study of crime and innocence betrayed. *Penguin, London. 1992, pb £6.99, pp407.*

Paul Sieveking

THE GEMSTONE FILE
edited by Jim Keith.

This is a symposium on that much-copied and circulated paranoid samizdat of 1975 that suggested the late Greek shipping magnate, Aristotle Onassis, was one of the chief figures in the secret government of the USA, having started out as an opium smuggler in the 1930s and subsequently made deals with the Rockefellers and Roosevelts. He kidnapped Howard Hughes in 1957 and arranged the assassination of Kennedy in 1963. The 'Skeleton Key to the Gemstone File', reproduced here, is a summary by Stephanie Caruana of an alleged 1,000-page dossier by Bruce Roberts, a manufacturer of artificial gemstones who died in 1976. The 'Key' has a large cast, including most of the Watergate gang, assorted mafiosi, and features the 'sodium morphate', apple-pie-smelling, poisoning technique, suppos-

edly favoured by the Mob.

A second-generation Xerox of the Key was initially shown to me in Wales by a worried George Andrews, and I passed it to Heathcote Williams for publication in an English underground magazine called *The Fanatic* (1977). Jim Keith's book has interesting background narratives from Stephanie Caruana and Mae Brussell, the west coast queen of conspiracy theorists. There are also musings and analyses from a number of people including Robert Anton Wilson and Jonathan Vankin. A stimulating read, isolating the obviously daft from the feasible. Overall, a nice balance between crackpottery and common sense. *IllumiNet Press, PO Box 746, Avondales Estates, GA 30002 USA. 1992, pb $14.95, pp222.*

Paul Sieveking

THE ENCHANTMENT OF THE TROSSACHS
by Louis Stott.

1992 marked the 300th anniversary of the Reverend Robert Kirk's famous disappearance, allegedly into fairyland. To commemorate this event, Louis Stott has written and published a useful booklet containing some fairy traditions from the surrounding region, the Trossachs. Apart from being a very beautiful part of Scotland, this area is the location of Kirk's fateful encounter with the Little People which took place on a hill near his home at Aberfoyle [see **FT61:29**]. Stott points out the places in Kirk's story which can still be seen; and, delving deeper into Kirk's life and death, lists other local fairylore and an account of Kirk's literary influence.

It's a nicely produced publication, illustrated with some old photographs, and well worth having in one's collection of fairy books. It might even inspire you to visit Doon Hill and walk in Kirk's footsteps. *Creag Darach Publications, Milton-of-Aberfoyle, Stirling FK8 3TD, Scotland. 1992, pb £2.40 (payable to Louis Stott), pp32, illus.*

Janet Bord

THE COLUMBUS MYTH
by Ian Wilson.

An excellent summary of recent research on the murky background to Columbus' voyage of "discovery", and the compiling of early information about the New World. Wilson quickly disposes of the idea of Columbus being the 'first' to reach America, and deals succinctly with the well-proven Norse settlement in Newfoundland. His main interest is in the possibility of Bristol seamen finding and fishing the rich cod grounds of Newfoundland in the 1480s.

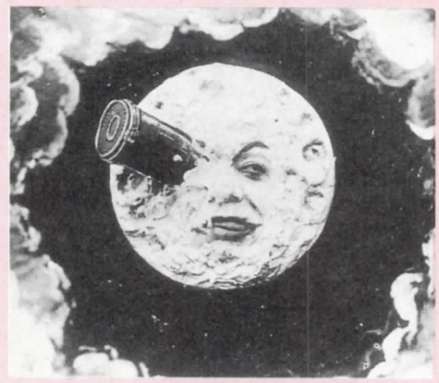
The evidence is circumstantial but cogent; there's also much fascinating material on the competition between Columbus and Cabot to be the first to set foot on the American mainland. It is well argued and thoroughly researched; my only quibble is that, although well annotated, there is nothing in the body of the text to locate the notes. I found this infuriating – but the book is highly recommended nevertheless. *Simon & Schuster, London. 1992, pb £8.99, pp256, illus, chronology, refs, bib, index.*

Steve Moore

EXHIBITION:
The Surrealchemist of Light

Charles Chaplin called Georges Méliès "the alchemist of light"; and the Paris Surrealists acknowledged him as a "wizard of dreams". Currently, London's Museum of the Moving Image is presenting a celebratory exhibition and the NFT is screening a 'major season' of his marvellous films.

Towards the end of the 18th century, a Belgian showman, called Robertson, manipulated *lanterna* 'phantasmgorias'; and Katterfelto, with his 'solar microscope' and 'caprimantic art', projected scary images of gigantic insects. These 'scientific' sorcerers may have inspired M.R. James when he described Karswell's magic lantern show in *Casting the Runes:*



"And then, if you please, he switched on another slide, which showed a great mass of snakes, centipedes, and disgusting creatures with wings, and somehow or other he made it seem as if they were climbing out of the picture and getting in amongst the audience."

Méliès (1861-1938) was a stage magician who, in 1888, took over the celebrated *Théatre Robert Hardin*, in Paris. Like other illusionists of the period, he was fascinated by an invention of the Lumière brothers, the Cinematograph. In 1895, Méliès purchased his first cine-camera/projector (not from the Lumières) and soon surreal 'objective chance' played its preordained role in the history of the cinema. One day, Méliès was filming the passing traffic in a Paris street, when his camera jammed. It only took a couple of seconds to fix the fault, then our hero continued to shoot the scene. When the resulting film was projected, Méliès was surprised and delighted to see an omnibus magically transform into a hearse.

The Parisian prestidigitator quickly became the world's first film director, and built the world's first (glass-walled, glass-roofed) film studio. Georges Méliès invented a new language of 'special effects' and – between 1896 and 1913 – produced an amazing series of magical movies featuring Faust, Gulliver, Cagliostro, Mesmer, Cinderella, Bluebeard, pantomime demons and dancing skeletons. His theatrical painted (monochrome) sets had a Rousseau-like quality, against which buxom chorus girls cavorted with acrobatic goblins.

He shot a Jules Verne rocket, full of top-hatted astronauts, into the eye of the man-in-the-moon (in *Voyage dans la Lune*, 1909). He inflated and exploded his own head. He made a hydra writhe. He *conjured* in a bizarre picturesque-postcard style. Forteans should take note of such thaumatatropic marvels, or their umbrellas will mushroom and their hats will be hare-filled.

Echoes of Méliès can be seen in the work of several Surrealist artists such as Magritte, Trouille, Ernst, Delvaux and others. He certainly had an influence upon me, as a fledgling film-maker, magician and painter. At the age of 14, I even made a crude 16mm movie about a trip to the moon, which I exhibited as part of my (equally crude) magic show, advertised with (let's call them crude) pictorial posters. Méliès's art was, and still is, invocatory.

Georges Méliès was a wizard. His 'Abominable Snowman' devoured a person and winked at King Kong, while leggy lasses capered with Méliès-as-Mephisto. Without doubt, he had a surreal sympathy for the devil, and enjoyed playing the part. No harm was ever meant; he was concerned only with entertainment, fantasy and fun. George (another George) Lucas is, today, involved with the same old stuff: 'Industrial Light and Magic'.

Tony 'Doc' Shiels

Méliès: Father of Film Fantasy – special exhibition at the Museum of the Moving Image (MOMI), South Bank, London SE1 8XT (Tel: 071 928 3232); open daily 10am-6pm – until 12 June 1993. An accompanying programme of Méliès's films will be shown at the National Film Theatre throughout April and May. Special all-in tickets available £10.

VAMPYRES
by Christopher Frayling.

Vampires, as we all know, keep on coming back from the dead, and the merest glance at the media shows that the graves are opening once again. The lore of the vampire, too, is a curious beast, compounded of 'fact' and 'fantasy' which often cannot, or should not, be disentangled. It may seem that the development is quite straightforward: from ancient myths to the reported-as-fact vampire panics of eastern Europe in the 18th century, to the pure fiction of the literary vampire and its modern media offshoots. But the reported-as-fact tales still remain, as in the notorious case of the 'Highgate vampire' of the early 1970s. And these tales, of course, have to be seen and evaluated in their context... a context largely moulded by the fictions of the last two centuries, and by *Dracula* in particular.

Christopher Frayling's fat book concentrates mainly on the literature of the 19th century, and thus provides valuable background material to vampire studies in all their forms. A lengthy introduction traces the developments in the genre – from the panics to Dracula – and defines the major elements (the Byronic lord, the femme fatale, the folklore material, etc). Even so, at 85 pages, it still seems rather compressed – especially when discussing the famous Byron/Shelley/Godwin/Polidori 'ghost story' session, where Frayling assumes too much prior knowledge on the reader's part.

The anthology section naturally includes such classics as Polidori's *The Vampyre*, and the obligatory extracts from *Varney the Vamprye* and *Dracula*, but there are a number of rarely-seen tales besides. Perhaps the most interesting are the extracts from Stoker's notes and researches for *Dracula* and, as usual, the extracts from Calmet's *Treatise on the Vampires of Hungary, etc.* The book concludes with extracts from psychiatric works on *hæomosexuality*, which, being no fan of Freud, I found tedious. Still, they are undoubtedly part of the larger picture and so not to be ignored. All in all, *Vampyres* is a worthy addition to the literature of blood-sucking... Slurp it while you can. *Faber & Faber, London. 1992, pb £9.99, pp429, illus, bib.*

Steve Moore

BOOKMART

Bookshops, second-hand dealers and mail-order services. Booking form on p66. Please mention FT when you respond.

ALBION BOOK LIST – Folklore, ghosts, ancient sites, occult, inc specialist journals. Free list – Mark Valentine, Flat 3, 10/12 Castle Gate, Clitheroe, Lancs BB7 1AZ – ☎ 0200 442507 (eves).

ATLANTIS BOOKS – For all folklore, paranormal books, etc. Mail order catalogue available – 49A Museum St, London WC1A 2LY – ☎ 071 405 2120.

CADUCEUS BOOKS – New & second-hand esoterica, New Age, occult, witchcraft etc. Catalogues £1: a) essential oils, crystals & incense; b) scarce occult books. – 14 Holgate Rd, York YO2 4AB – ☎ 0904 628021.

DEJA VU BOOKS – Rare Forteana, psychic research & esoteric books & artefacts from the 17th century to now, including signed etc. Catalogue & search service – 31 Trafalgar St, Brighton, Sussex BN1 4ED – ☎ 0273 600400.

ENIGMA – Books and periodicals on all Fortean subjects, UFOs etc. Latest imports from USA, inc. Corliss Sourcebooks. Free lists – 15 Rydal St, Burnley, Lancs BB10 1HS – ☎ 0282 424837.

EXCALIBUR BOOKS – New, secondhand and imported titles on folklore, paranormal and UFOs. Free List – 1 Hillside Gardens, Bangor, Co. Down, N.Ireland BT19 2SJ. – ☎ 0247 458579.

MIDNIGHT BOOKS – New & second-hand books on all aspects of the unexplained; 100s of titles in stock including Corliss' sourcebooks & 'Catalogs'. SAE for catalogue. Free searches – The Haven, 21 Windsor Mead, Sidford, Sidmouth, Devon EX10 9SJ. – ☎ 0395 516806

MILLENNIUM BOOKS – 2nd hand books on UFOs, and mysteries weird and wonderful. For free list, write, fax, phone – 9 Chesham Road, Brighton, Sussex BN2 1NB. – ☎ 0273 671967.

SPACELINK BOOKS - Since 1967 Britain's leading stockist of UFO and Crop Circle books and magazines, plus wide range of Fortean titles. Free lists. - Lionel Beer, 115 Hollybush Lane, Hampton, Middx TW12 2QY. – ☎ 081 979 3148.

SPECIALIST KNOWLEDGE SERVICES (SKS) – Internationally renowned specialists in new books on the paranormal, Forteana, mysteries, philosophical & unusual. Send for free lists – 20 Paul St, Frome, Somerset BA11 1DX. – ☎ 0373 451777.

MAG WATCH

THE CEREALOGIST

Most periodicals dealing with crop circles are becoming increasingly partisan and directionless; so it is a pleasure to see the heroically independent *Cerealogist* (under John Michell's educated editorship) as strong and informative as ever. Issue 8 (Winter 1993) contains much excellent material, including coverage of 1992 circles abroad as well as southern England; George Wakefield blasting the hoaxers and tricksters; Christine Rhone on how Wakefield was ousted as editor of *The Circular*; Andy Collins interpreting circles as manifestations of Reichian 'orgone'; and assessment of the famous circle-making competition. *TC: SKS, 20 Paul St, Frome, Somerset BA11 1DX, UK.*

THE LEY HUNTER

Under the aegis of TLH editor Paul Devereux, the followers of the 'old straight track' are in the throes of a philosophical and spiritual convulsion, throwing off the labcoat of technology-based notions of energies and dowsing and donning shamanic horns and hides, the better to interpret leys as 'spirit paths' etc. Issue 118 (Winter 1993) contains a richly varied symposium of articles on the new approach. *TLH: Box 92, Penzance, Cornwall TR18 2XL, UK.*

SKEPTICAL INQUIRER

Despite their proclaimed intention of disabusing us of all our misconceptions, most of the contents of this quarterly journal of the CSICOPs is well-written and well worth the consideration. Among subjects dealt with in the Winter 1993 issue are... the anthropologist Margaret Mead's invention of myths about Samoan culture; the police use of psychics; a recent survey of Americans showing increasing belief in UFOs, supernatural, etc; and ongoing debates about miracles, abductions and Creationist 'facts'. *SK: PO Box 703, Buffalo, NY 14226-0703, USA.*

INFO JOURNAL

The journal of the International Fortean Organization (founded 1965) is still publishing good Fortean material. Issue 67 (Oct 1992) reexamines Fort's case of meteoric stones in India; the relevance of Forteana to science; an alignment of churches in Germany. *INFO: PO Box 367, Arlington, VA 22210-0367, USA.*

ARTIFEX

The Winter 1993 issue of this journal of the Archaeus Project – researching consciousness and self-regulation – features articles by Martin Kottmeyer and Richard Leigh exploring the undying belief in a Flat Earth, as it is today and as it was for Columbus and Magellan. *AP: 2402 University Ave, St Paul, MN 55114, USA.*

NEXUS

This lively information-exchange-based magazine from Australia covers New Age, paranormal, ufology, conspiracy and Fortean related topics. The Feb-Mar 1993 issue examines microwave effects on health; the Mexican UFO waves of 1991-92; and the relationship between energy sources and political power. *Nexus: PO Box 30, Mapleton, Queensland 4560, Australia.*

INT. UFO REPORTER

The Jan-Feb 1993 issue of this journal of the J. Allen Hynek Centre for UFO Studies has an interesting memoir of astronomer Hynek's early encounters with the USAF and the UFO problem; more disputes over the Corona and San Agustin 'UFO crashes'; Budd Hopkins reproaches Carl Sagan over SETI. *CUFOS: 2457 West Peterson, Chicago, IL 60659, USA.*

DEAR FT...

VEGETABLE LAMBS AND THE DRUNKARD'S FATE

■ Besides the Vegetable Lamb in the Tradescant collection [***FT66:34***], there are other examples in the British Museum of Natural History and the College of Surgeons (or there were). However, these toys made in South China (where they are called *Kew-tsie*) provide only a partial explanation of the legend.

In all the early accounts, the Vegetable Lamb is located around the Caspian Sea – the region from which Astrakhan fur, made from the pelts of unborn lambs, comes. In his classic study of the matter in 1877, Henry Lee established that the root origin of the Vegetable Lamb was the Cotton Plant, which does indeed produce 'wool' from a plant. There is a full account of the legend, quoting all the early reports and later explanations, in my book *The Magic Zoo* (London, 1979).

A hitherto overlooked account of spontaneous human combustion is to be found in Jules Verne's novel *Captain at Fifteen (Un Capitaine de Quinze Ans)* (Paris: Hetzel, 1878, part II, ch.11), which is set in Angola in the early part of 1873. The alcoholic king of Kazonnde [Kasange] becomes the victim of his craving for white traders' spirits when a basin of spiced punch is brewed up one night.

Moini Loungga came forward. He seized the ladle from the hands of the trader, plunged it into the basin, then withdrawing it filled with flaming punch, put it to his lips.

What a cry came from the king of Kazonnde!

A spontaneous combustion had resulted. The king flamed up like a demijohn of paraffin. The fire developed little heat, but devoured him nevertheless.

At this sight, the natives' dance came to a sudden halt.

A minister of Moini Loungga threw himself upon his ruler to put him out; but, no less alcoholised than his master, he in turn burst into flames.

At this rate the entire court of Moini Loungga was in danger of being burnt alive!

Alvez and Negoro made no attempt to help the king. The terrified women took flight. As for Coimbra, he took to his heels, well knowing his own inflammable nature.

Striking a light in darkest Africa

The king and his minister, who had fallen to the ground, writhed in terrible agonies.

In bodies so completely alcoholised, the combustion produced a light bluish flame that water could not put out. Even if extinguished on the surface, it would continue to burn internally. When the alcohol had penetrated through all the tissues, there is no way of stopping the combustion.

Moments later the king and his minister were dead, but their bodies continued to burn. Soon, in the spot where they had fallen, there was nothing to be seen but some fragile cinders, one or two fragments of vertebræ fingers and nails which in cases of spontaneous combustion, the fire does not consume, but which it covers with a stinking, revolting soot.
It was all that remained of the king of Kazonnde and his minister.
[pp412-414, Livre de Poche ed.]

This grim scene of the king going up in flames was illustrated by Henri Meyer and engraved on wood by Charles Barbant, a vignette worth adding to the slim corpus of SHC pictures (**see illustration**).

Verne was a great admirer of Dickens and would have known of the celebrated scene in *Bleak House*. Here he accepts the theory that alcoholism plays a significant part in SHC. But he was also an avid reader of science magazines, geographical journals and other documentary sources. It would be interesting to know if this fictional incident is based on the death of an actual Angolan chief in the 1870s, rather than on an adaptation of a contemporary account in a French magazine of the phenomenon in a European setting.

Peter Costello
Dublin

DREAM TICKET

■ A workmate of mine came in one morning and said that he had a dream the previous night that he was having a drink in a pub at a place called Stoke Bardolf, near Nottingham, when a friend came up and said that he had won on the horses and handed over £35. He looked in the paper for that day's racing and found that a horse was running at Goodwood at 2:30 called Bardolf. So one or two of us, me included, backed it on a straight win and it came in at 7 to 1. Total winnings came to £35. Coincidence?

D. Johnson
Sherwood, Nottingham

GRIMSBY PORTENTS

■ The unexplained object described as a 'cup-like pram' witnessed by Art Wetherell in Grimsby in 1975 [***FT63:64***] bears a marked similarity to descriptions of an apparition witnessed on at least three occasions by Grimsby fishermen in the Humber estuary off Spurn Point in 1952/53. See the booklet *Humber Lights: Tall Tales of the Grimsby Trawlermen* by G. Farrell (Dock Tower Press 1991). It's an amusing notion that, with the decline of the Humberside fishing industry in the 1970s, this unidentified floating object came inland to weave its strange enchantment among the Grimbarians.

Ainslie Parker
Grimsby

WEIRD

■ Ian Simmons's review of *The Circlemakers* [***FT66:61***] incorrectly quoted Hunter S. Thompson. The correct version is: "When the going gets weird, the weird turn pro". Obviously not a trifling matter.

Steven Preston
Ealing, London

SHEERWATER FISH FALL

■ On the morning of Friday 15 January at around 7:30am I walked to the bottom of my garden in St Michael's Road, Sheerwater, and saw a fish on the path. There were others on the lawn, in the rose bush and on the shed roof, all within a 15ft radius – see photos. I counted 12 in all, ranging from four to five inches and looking like sprats. I couldn't see any in adjacent gardens.

The previous night had been very windy and stormy, with winds from the south-west. I contacted the *Woking Review* who carried a short report on 23 January. Later I heard that John Field, who lives next door but one, had found 11 fish within a small area in his garden. He is a keen fisherman and also thought they looked like sprats, which are of course seawater fish. The sea is almost 40 miles away, and the Thames over six miles. The fish smelled, so they could have been out of the water a long time.

Derek Gosling
Sheerwater, Surrey

A MATTER OF METEORS

■ I feel I should correct your note on the 'meteor shower' over the eastern United States on 9 October 1992 [***FT67:49***]. Press reports of this event were inaccurate. The Draconid shower, also sometimes referred to as the Giacobinids after its parent comet P/Giacobini-Zinner, is not an annual event. Indeed, meteors from the shower have so far only been definitely detected in some of the years when the comet returns to the solar vicinity (roughly every six years).

The last detected shower was in 1986, and although the comet returned to perihelion in 1992, I have heard of no reports of any unusual meteor activity produced as a result. This is much as expected since the material which seems to produce the shower is concentrated very close to the comet itself. We hope for better things at the 1998 return. Furthermore, there is still no recorded meteorite fall associated with a meteor shower, despite reasonably systematic observations for about 150 years. It would be most interesting if this situation were to change.

As for the actual fall in question, which took place at around 23:50 UTC, the meteorite track started over West Virginia and ended over the Pennsylvania/New York border. This track, SSW to NNE, is incompatible with a Draconid origin, since any genuine shower meteor would be moving north to south. The visible flight lasted for about 30 seconds. The meteorite was later classified as an L6 chondrite weighing 13kg, and was sold some weeks later for a reported $69,000.

At least 24 video recordings were made of the brilliant meteor, which was probably in excess of magnitude -14 (as bright as full moon). These show that very heavy fragmentation occurred towards the end of the visible flight – at least 20 fragments can be made out on the better recordings. Other possible meteorite falls cannot therefore be ruled out, although it is unlikely that they will be found since chondrites look much like terrestrial rocks.

I also noted your short note on Comet P/Swift-Tuttle [***FT66:7***], which reported another misleading media event. This comet is the apparent parent of the major northern hemisphere meteor shower the Perseids, visible from the end of July to mid-August every year. In 1991 and 1992, short-lived bursts much brighter than usual were detected. We now think that these were precursors of the approaching comet, and we are hopeful that another outburst will occur this August – specifically on the night of 11/12 August between 23-02 hours UTC, which will mean European observers should catch the best from the shower, with luck and clear skies.

Unfortunately, rather than take up this exciting prospect for the immediate future, the press chose the more distant though spectacular 'end of the world' story. With an orbital period of about 130 years at present, Swift-Tuttle should indeed return to perihelion in about 2126AD. It will probably be a bright, naked-eye object in our skies. If it passes through the Earth's orbit during a critical three-minute period, we could be in trouble, but even then the chances of a collision are far, far smaller than the quoted 400:1. The Perseids should be well worth seeing that year at least!

Alastair McBeath
(Vice-President of the International Meteor Organization)
Morpeth, Northumberland

RESPECT FOR ALIEN ABDUCTIONS

■ One can only marvel at Andy Roberts' declaration, whose sole inspiration seems to be wishful thinking, that the controversial – and suspiciously atypical – Linda Napolitano abduction story "is going to be *the* case on which abductions as alien events stand or fall" [***FT67:53***]. Roberts further tips his hand when he informs us that when "it all falls down, the nonsense that aliens are abducting human beings can be laid to rest". In your dreams, Andy.

Here on this side of the pond, abduction research has benefited from the active investigations, not only of serious ufologists, but of scientists and mental health professionals, some of them (e.g. John Mack of the Harvard Medical School) leading figures in their disciplines. I have yet to meet one – I here exclude, of course, armchair 'experts' – who deems the alien hypothesis mere 'nonsense'. Even those who have not specifically embraced it acknowledge that such an hypothesis merits a respectful hearing. After all, none of the others have proven notably successful.

It is disheartening to encounter, in FT of all places, the sort of empty rhetorical posturing exemplified by Roberts' remarks. Save that sort of rubbish for the rubes who read *Skeptical Enquirer*.

Jerome Clark
Canby, Minnesota

SILENT CITIES IN THE SKY

■ I recall thinking that the mystery of the Alaskan sky cities [***FT66:36***] had been resolved some time ago. One of the big American science glossies – most probably *Scientific American*, but just possibly *American Scientist* – carried a long photo-feature demonstrating that optical effects in certain atmospheric conditions can result in massive magnified images of ice crystals being displayed in the sky. These could easily be mistaken for images of built structures, given their regularities and angularity. I would guess that this article appeared in the early 1980s. Perhaps some other reader will recall this article, or have access to an index of the magazines.

Ian Miles
Manchester

RADIOMETRIC DATING

■ I was quite disappointed to see Richard Milton's highly misleading article on radiometric dating [*FT66:24*]. Milton relies, uncritically, on the work of Mormon creationist Melvin Cook and on Henry Morris, President of the Institute for Creation Research. It appears that he has not consulted the original sources he cites. For instance, he claims that Hans Petterson estimated the rate of meteoric dust fall on the earth's surface to be 14 million tons per year, but Petterson himself considered this to be an overestimate and suggested a figure of five million to be more accurate. His measurement, done in 1960, was performed with smog measurement devices at the summit of Hawaii's Mauna Loa volcano. In the 33 years since those measurements, accumulated satellite data show the actual rate of meteoric dust fall to be 11,000 to 18,000 tons per annum. Milton's information is not only out of date, but inflated more than 700 times.

Milton brings up discordant potassium-argon dates on Hawaiian lava flows, but fails to note that the very sources he cites explain that the inaccurate dates are caused by the presence of olivine xenoliths, which carry less argon. This is the sort of thing that is allowed for in radiometric dating. To cite Funkhouser and Naughton's 1968 study of xenoliths as evidence against the general accuracy of potassium-argon dating is simply dishonest.

Finally, Milton wrongly claims that "the sole method [..] of arriving at this immense age [of the Earth] is radiometric dating". He not only overlooks the fact that there are independent and self-checking radiometric techniques (isochron dating), but he ignores non-radiometric techniques such as ice-core dating, palæometric reversal data, geologic data (such as varves) and dendrochronology (tree-ring dating). Dates from all of these techniques converge, confirming the general accuracy of radiometric dating.

For a history of different methods of dating the Earth and discussion of the misguided objections Milton raises, I recommend G. Brent Dalrymple's recent book, *The Age of the Earth* and Arthur N. Strahler's *Science and Earth History*.

Jim Lippard
Tucson, Arizona

■ If you take a rate of radioactive decay that has been measured for a few decades and then claim that it has been going on at the same rate for four billion years, you are making an unsupported assumption. The æons generated by radiometric clocks, going back long before the corroboration of other dating methods, are just assumptions. Nothing compels us to accept that a radioactive decay constant has been invariant. Personally, I'm rather sceptical about any talk of millions of years of past time, let alone billions.

Nick Kollerstrom
Guildford, Surrey

REDS IN THE POND

■ As a footnote to the feature on the Hampstead Seal [*FT65:47*], I enclose a cartoon from the *Evening News* (3 Nov 1926). It seems that the whole thing was a Red Plot. John Citizen explains to the bewildered authorities that the *real* cause of industrial unrest is the influence of Moscow.

Jeremy Harte
Ewell, Surrey

LETTER-BOX AMPUTATIONS

■ You recently reported the story of a girl who suffered the loss of a finger due to an accident involving a letter-box [*FT65:9*]. The same event happened to one of my patients last year – she lost the tip of one finger after posting a letter through a door. I wonder if this is more common than we realise. I would be grateful to hear of any more such incidents.

Dr John Leigh
43 Larchwood,
Harraton, Washington,
NE38 9BT, UK

RIGOR TORTOISE

■ Your 'Pet's Corner' column [*FT64:19*] demonstrated one of the hazards of keeping hamsters. If the temperature of their surroundings falls sufficiently, they go into hibernation. To avoid burial alive, any hamster suddenly found 'dead' should be put in a warm spot for a few hours. Tortoises are equally worrying: it is often very difficult to determine if they are dead until they start to hum, I mean smell!

Ian T. Peters, BVMS, MRCVS
Lamberhurst

HERALD ANGEL

■ I'd like to submit the story of a strange experience I had in 1905 when I was seven years old.

Each Saturday morning I used to visit my friend's house where we'd spend hours playing. However, on this particular Saturday, my mother told me to go up and see my grandfather who lived in the next village along the road, Pensarn, which was about a mile away. He hadn't been too well and, although I loved him dearly, I decided to ignore my mother's request and sneak off to see my friend instead.

Leaving our house, I didn't feel guilty at all and continued along the streets to my friend's house, but just as I was about to turn the corner, an angel appeared in front of me and blocked my path by stretching out both his arms – he didn't say anything, but I got the impression that he wanted to prevent me from going on my way. I didn't feel any shock or surprise. He had golden or fair hair and small white wings which seemed to come out the middle of his back rather than his shoulders. He didn't seem to tower above me, but hovered slightly off the ground and yet remained still. Apart from his white gown I didn't take in any other details and whilst he didn't speak I seemed to get the 'message' that I should return home.

When I got in I didn't tell my mother what I had seen, I just seemed to accept it, although I can't think why! Later that night, we received news of my grandfather's death. I don't know if the two events were connected. I've never told anyone about this, not even my mother.

Mrs M. Treharne
Maesteg, Mid-Glamorganshire

[This letter is one of many accounts of supernatural experiences collected by Sharon Campbell, via appeals in local papers. Would any publisher interested in making a book from her collection please contact her through the FT editorial address?]

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ASTRONET – is a computer bulletin board network operating in Australia with links to the MUFON BBS in the USA. Free access to discussions on UFOs, alternative science, Tesla, the paranormal and Fortean-related subjects. AstroNet would like to make a connection with the UK. Contact Bob Fletcher, 2/35 Cash St, Kingsbury, Victoria, Australia. BBS: +61-3-467-8090. Voice: +61-3-467-8065. 2

'GORILLA WOMAN' info needed - I am researching Julia Pastrana, the famous freak (d.1860). Any details/life-story/source recommendations etc gratefully received. Contact Stephen Volk, 9 Coppice Hill, Bradford-on-Avon, Wilts BA15 1ST. Fax: 0225 862281

EVENTS

LONDON UNVEILED. ASAP (Association for the Scientific Study of Anomalous Phenomena) presents a weekend symposium on the mystical and mysterious aspects of London. Speakers: Nigel Pennick, Chesca Potter, Andrew Collins, Steve Wilson, Rob Stephenson, Caroline Wise. Lectures 15 May, 10-15 Conway Halls, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Walking tour 16 May. Tickets (ASSAP members £7.50) from London Unveiled, PO Box 196, London WC1A 2LY.

GLASGOW - I'm thinking of starting a local Fortean society. All those interested with ideas for dates, venues, agendas for meetings please contact Desi Atkinson, 21 Kent Road, Glasgow, G3 7EH or phone 041 204 4207.

PUBLICISE YOUR EVENT HERE – Fax us details on 081 552 5466.

UFOs – FACT, FRAUD OR FANTASY? – Independent UFO Network international conference. Speakers include: Bud Hopkins, Jenny Randles, Cynthis Hind, Paul Devereux, Hilary Evans, Dr Sue Blackmore and others. 14-15 August 1993 at Sheffield Polytechnic. For full details send SAE to: Stu Smith, 15 Rydal St, Burnley, Lancs BB10 1HS – or Phone: 0282 24837.

ORGONE93 – conference on how the works of Wilhelm Reich relate to UFOs, crop circles and earth mysteries. 4 Sept at Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq, London. Lectures, evening social + Sunday tour. Tickets £10 (inc. donation to charity). For details contact Andy Collins: Box 189, Leigh-on-Sea, Essex SS9 1NF.

FOLKLORE SOCIETY EVENTS – Informal evenings at the Jeremy Bentham pub in University St, London WC1, 6:30pm for 7: 21 April, 'Contemporary legends'. 15 May, Annual Children's Folklore Conference (Conway Hall, London); 4-6 June, British Folklore Studies weekend (University of Glamorgan). For details on these and other events, phone Steve Roud at the Folklore Society: 071 380 7095 (messages 071 387 5894).

SOCIETY FOR PSYCHICAL RESEARCH – Lectures: 20 May, 'Alien contact, the inner space dimension of the UFO mystery' (Jenny Randles). 17 June, 'A psychophysics approach to PSI research' (Peter Maddock). Venue: the Lecture Hall of Kensington Central Library, Campden Hill Road, London W8, at 6:30pm. Non-members £3, student cards £1. Further information from the SPR at 49 Marloes Rd, Kensington, London W8 6LA. Tel: 071 937 8984.

LONDON EARTH MYSTERIES CIRCLE – Evening meetings in St Andrew's Seminar Room, Maria Assumpta Centre, 23 Kensington Square, London W8, at 7pm on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays in each month. Members £1.00, non-members £2.00, unwaged £1.50. 23 Feb, social evening, all welcome. There are also field trips and outings. Contact: Rob Stephenson, 136 Bravington Rd, London W9 3AL.

TEMS – social and study group for paranormal phenomena and earth mysteries. Lectures: 25 April, 'The best ley in Surrey (Eileen Roche); 22 May, field trip to Hampshire ; 30 May, 'Big cat sightings' (Steve Ashcroft). For details of venue etc, ring Lionel Beer on 081 979 3148, or Eileen Grimshaw on 0483 69583.

BUFORA – Lectures: 1 May, 'Contactees ungagged' (Ken Phillips); 5 June, 'The ET origin of consciousness' (Caroline Thomas). For details of venue etc, ring 0582-763218.

ASSAP – 15'16 May, London Unveiled symposium at Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq, London. SAE for details to: London Unveiled, Box 196, London WC1A 2LY. Monthly talk and social evenings, first Thursday of every month, 6:30pm, at the Tattershall Castle (it's a moored paddle steamer on the Thames), close to Embankment underground station, London.

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